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THE *FRONT ISLAMIQUE DU SALUT* AND THE DENIAL OF LEGITIMACY

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Abstract

This work is an investigation into the recent political crisis in Algeria, with a focus on the Islamist party at its heart—the *Front islamique du salut*. It provides a theoretical and contextual framework by which we can understand the party's emergence and subsequent decline, arguing for greater acceptance of alternative, non-secular politics where there is a clear public appetite for such change. In particular, it emphasises the ways in which the FIS sought to establish a legitimate mandate through a blend of continuity and change. This, I argue, is evident in the party's religio-nationalist modes of expression, which built on yet offered a crucial distinction from the FLN's relationship to nationalism and Islam. It is also evident in the FIS' interaction with the state both during and after the period of its legalisation. My analysis shows how the party evolved towards political maturity and moderation, seeking to engage with rather than subvert the state institutions, albeit from an adversarial position. That this was ultimately unsuccessful is most clearly evident from the military-led campaign to rid Algeria of any real Islamist opposition, despite the legitimacy of the FIS' electoral success. My conclusion that the FIS was denied this legitimacy is based on a reading of contemporary political theory as well as an assessment of political developments on the ground.

List of acronyms

AIS – Armée islamique du salut

ALN – Armée de libération nationale

ANP – Armée nationale populaire

APN – Assemblée populaire nationale

AQMI – Al-Qaeda au pays du Maghreb islamique

DRS – Département de renseignement et de sécurité

FFS – Front des forces socialistes

FIDH – Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l’homme

FIS – Front islamique du salut

FLN – Front de libération nationale

GIA – Groupes islamiques armés

GPRA – Gouvernement provisoire de la république algérienne

GSPC – Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat

HCE – Haut comité d’Etat

LADDH – Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l’homme

MAJD – Mouvement algérien pour la jeunesse et le développement

MDA – Mouvement pour la démocratie en Algérie

MDS – Mouvement démocratique et social

MIA – Mouvement islamique armé

MNI – Mouvement de la nahda islamique (En-Nahda)

MSP – Mouvement de la société de la paix

PAGS – Parti de l’avant-garde socialiste

PT – Parti des travailleurs

RCD – Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie

RND – Rassemblement national démocratique

SM – Sécurité militaire

Introduction

The political sphere in Algeria was very nearly transformed at the beginning of the 1990s, when the country's first multi-party elections allowed a new force to emerge: the *Front islamique du salut* (FIS). This development was cut short in January 1992, when the second round of parliamentary elections was cancelled and an emergency interim committee was established to run the state. This thesis considers the nature of the political force that was thereby rejected, arguing that it offered a balanced and legitimate form of political opposition and that its exclusion was therefore unjust. As such it is not a history of the FIS or of contemporary Algerian politics, and although I will refer in detail to the key events during the period under analysis, a summary of these events would be useful at this stage.

It was under Algeria's third President, Colonel Chadli Bendjedid, that real political reform first took place. When riots broke out in October 1988, Chadli, who had already begun to reverse some of his predecessor's policies (notably by slowing down the country's industrialisation and favouring increased economic liberalisation), promised to introduce a new constitution that would allow for multi-party politics. This led to the formation of dozens of new parties, including the FIS, which was founded in February 1989 under the leadership of Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj.¹ A highly successful message combining nationalism and a moral critique of the state was spread via political exploitation of mosques around the country. This, combined with a highly effective organisational capacity (as demonstrated by its success in providing aid in the aftermath of the October 1989 earthquake), ensured popular appeal and saw the FIS secure an emphatic victory in the municipal elections of June 1990. Although this did not threaten the real seat of power, the party's continued strength appeared to provoke the military authorities in June 1991, when

¹ A word about names and spelling is necessary here. Many Algerian names are customarily written with the surname first: Abassi Madani and Chadli Bendjedid are two such examples. Where I refer to them with just one name, it will therefore be as Abassi and Chadli. With regard to spelling, one finds several variations of many names. An example is Benhadj and Belhadj (I have chosen the latter).

mass demonstrations organised by the FIS were violently repressed. Then, when the FIS secured a massive victory in the first round of parliamentary elections six months later, the President resigned, most likely under pressure from senior military officers, a state of emergency was called, and the FIS was dissolved by state decree. The violence that ensued was the product of the Islamist backlash, but also of the military crackdown on this movement. Hundreds of FIS officials were placed in detention camps, along with thousands of other prisoners suspected of Islamist involvement.² The conflict steadily worsened as diverse and nebulous militant groups emerged, fighting the authorities and one another to harness the momentum of the FIS' success at the polls. Militarily, the war was chaotic, with uncertainty surrounding the bloody violence. As we will see in Chapter IV, questions were asked about who was behind the attacks on civilians. Politically, the conflict proved unproductive: after several years of violence, various attempts at negotiations had failed (see Chapter III), and a pro-military leader emerged in the form of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, first elected President in 1999. It was his *concorde civile* (an amnesty for guerrilla fighters willing to give up arms)³ in July of that year that effectively led to the end of the conflict, which had killed somewhere between 100,000 and more than 200,000 people.⁴

² Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), 'La levée du voile : l'Algérie de l'extrajudiciaire et de la manipulation', p. 6, available at http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/dz_femmes1997f.pdf [last accessed 21 April 2010].

³ The full text of this legislation is available at http://www.el-mouradia.dz/francais/algerie/histoire/Dossier/loi_sur_la_concorde_civile.htm [last accessed 21 April 2010].

⁴ These figures are disputed; see Salima Mellah, 'Comité justice pour l'Algérie : Les massacres en Algérie 1992–2004', p. 6, available at www.algerie-tpp.org/tpp/pdf/dossier_2_massacres.pdf [last accessed 21 April 2010].

Locating my research: bibliographical choices and research contributions

The sources I have used in this work are an indication of its intended location within the academic work so far available on this tragic period of Algerian political history. I had two priorities in my selection of research material. First, I wanted to privilege sources that have contributed to our *political* understanding, whether through broad theory or specific contextual analysis. All of the work referred to therefore deals with politics in one way or another. For example, part of Chapter I is devoted to nation-building, nationalism and independence. This work is theoretical in nature, as it offers a broad insight into the difficulties, both for the state and its opponents, of identifying and promoting national characteristics, particularly in the aftermath of colonial occupation. The reader will note, however, that my focus is political: there is little or no discussion of cultural manifestations of nationalism, as can be found in literature or music, for example. Nor is there any discussion in this thesis of the wider ethical or philosophical questions that a radical change in political representation would imply. And even where I refer to religion, which is of course an essential strand in the rise of Islamism, I emphasise its relationship with politics rather than attempting to offer any theological insight. This is not to say that the FIS (and Islamists more generally) have no spiritual foundation; indeed Chapter II argues that such a view is unhelpful, as it obscures the potential for modern democratic politics to be redefined by legitimate, non-secular groups like the FIS (see Section 2.3). My emphasis, however, remains political: I am more interested in the ways in which the FIS interacted with the state and what it might have offered the wider political system than in the theological basis that motivated its supporters.

The second priority in selecting my sources was to privilege French-language material as much as possible in order to reflect my position as a researcher in French Studies. This was possible to a large extent because the historic links between France and Algeria have meant that a greater body of relevant material has emerged in French (from both countries) than in English. A further advantage is that a wider diversity of styles is available: with the exception of media reports, work on Algeria from the Anglophone world tends to be almost exclusively academic, such as the major contribution made by Hugh Roberts, whereas the material available in French covers not only academia, but also popular history, journalistic investigation, extensive online debates and polemics, and, crucially, testimonial publications from Algerians involved in the conflict (see Chapter IV). Needless to say, there is also a great body of work available on cultural and transcultural, ethical and philosophical issues, although for the reasons already outlined I have focused on those publications that offer *political* insight. I should also say that my preference for French-language sources was in no way absolute. The advantage of reading both English and French allowed me to access a wider body of material, and it would have been artificial to overlook this. Furthermore, as this thesis is written in English, it will primarily be of interest to academics, students and other readers from the Anglophone world. This is all the more relevant given the relative paucity of material on contemporary Algerian politics that is available in English.

Review of the literature

Let us now take a closer look at the sources used herein via a review of the literature. Broadly speaking, I have used three types of material: theory that is unrelated to Islamism as such, but which I have invoked in order to outline my position in relation to it; theory that deals with the question of Islamism as a global

phenomenon; and contextual analysis of the specific case of the FIS in Algeria. Before outlining some of the literature on Islamism and the FIS, I would like to explain the ways in which I have used peripheral sources. Section 1 of Chapter I, for example, studies nationalism and nation-building as theorised by Anthony Smith, who makes no reference to Islamism. I chose this work because Smith offers a wide reading of nationhood that does not rely exclusively on modern phenomena such as the nation-state; this allows me to emphasise that nationalism as expressed by the FIS can challenge (although not totally reject) the FLN's portrayal of the Algerian nation by seeking to tap into a more long-standing legacy than the 1954 revolution—Islamic heritage. Similarly, Section 1 of Chapter II examines sources that do not refer to Islamism, but which I have used to make a central point. By examining political theory on democracy and some competing models, I seek to encourage an open definition that would not obstruct the inclusion of groups like the FIS in modern democratic politics. Notably, by invoking the debate on communitarianism and liberalism, two competing models of democratic theory, I wish to show that the Western democratic paradigm can accommodate at least some of the challenges it faces from emerging political forces (the isolation and individualism of liberalist Western society is a common target for Islamist thinkers).

Of course, most of my sources relate to Islamism generally or the FIS specifically; an overview of this literature would be useful at this stage. As I have said, the inclusion of French-language sources added considerable diversity to the nature and style of the material available, and I have endeavoured to reflect this diversity as much as possible. First, there is academic material. This is available in both languages, as represented in French by writers like Lahouari Addi or François Burgat (see Chapter II in particular), and in English by writers like Hugh Roberts or John Esposito. Within this category, the various sources are of course useful in different

ways. Some writers focus more on *theories* that help us understand and assess the phenomenon of Islamism, while others offer a close historical and/or political reading. Broad theoretical insights are provided by analysts like Abderrahim Lamchichi, Gilles Kepel, Olivier Carré, John Esposito, Olivier Roy and François Burgat. The main contribution of Roy and Burgat is that they evaluate the viability and potential weaknesses (Roy) or strengths (Burgat) of the emerging Islamist opposition worldwide. While they back up their analysis with specific examples, their primary objective appears to be broad rather than specific. I offer a close reading of their work, together with that of Lahouari Addi, in Chapter II. This provides a representative sample of the different approaches to Islamism being developed by political scientists in France. All three of these authors have distinct views, but with some inevitable cross-overs. Both Roy and Addi, for example, identify tensions in the relationship between Islamism and modern politics, or modernity more generally, although Addi's work offers a greater balance between theoretical and contextual insights. In theoretical terms, he establishes a balanced thesis that recognises the potential fecundity of the Islamist movement, but ultimately challenges its legitimacy on ideological grounds. His work is also a very valuable source of case-specific information on Algeria, as he offers in-depth knowledge of the country's political structures and recent historical context. Burgat deals with many of the same themes as Roy and Addi, such as the causes behind the emergence of Islamism, competing definitions of the phenomenon, or its relationship with democracy and modernity. It is particularly on this last question that his perspective differs. Burgat is one of the leading voices in France to advocate greater acceptance of the Islamist challenge to traditional political structures. His theoretical insights are therefore an essential complement to the case-specific arguments offered by other analysts referred to herein. These include John Ruedy, Michael Willis, Jean-

Jacques Lavenue, Mohand Tahi, Frédéric Volpi and Hugh Roberts. The advantage offered by these writers is clear: well-referenced, factual analysis that cannot be overlooked in any serious study of contemporary Algeria. Perhaps the most nuanced of these sources is Roberts, whose detailed political analysis stands out as the most convincing, yet unbiased assessment of the FIS and its interaction with the state. He is interested in legality, legitimacy and political imperatives, but limits his analysis to what can be ascertained from the facts. This, too, is my own approach, although as we will see the *facts* are extremely hard to determine with any certainty, which is why I felt it was important to include sources from outside the academic world.

The recent Algerian conflict has produced an astonishing range of material from outside academic research that provides us with the essential inside perspective needed to challenge the hermetic store of official information. This material complements the sources to which I have already referred. Three further categories can be identified here: investigative publications, testimonies, and reports, both by NGOs (human rights organisations and dissident Algerian groups) and the United Nations. The complexity of Algeria's political climate, in particular since the beginning of political pluralism in October 1988, means it is essential to refer to the kind of local, investigative publications provided by writers like Amine Touati, Ahmed Rouadjia and Mustafa al-Ahnaf. Touati's day-by-day account of the June 1991 FIS demonstrations, for example, is unparalleled in its detail and offers nuances that are not necessarily available in sources from outside Algeria. Similarly, his account of the individuals involved in the Islamist revolt post-1992 is particularly useful, as it avoids any dramatisation and is careful not to blur the differences between, say, GIA militants and FIS activists. Rouadjia's excellent account of the role of mosques in the period preceding the conflict is another extremely detailed insight into the nature of political life in Algeria. He also de-dramatises a

phenomenon that might appear unusual to Western readers: the widespread use of mosques for political action, and the state's deferential attitude towards their exploitation. Such a scenario is in fact common in the Maghreb, where state institutions are regularly by-passed by informal social structures in opposition to the state.⁵

One of the most important elements in our current understanding of the Algerian civil war is the testimonies to have emerged in recent years from individuals involved in various ways. Chapter IV in particular focuses on this material, as it most directly deals with the central theme of that chapter: the conduct of the state, and the military in particular, during the conflict. Examples of these sources include publications by former secret service agents, Abdelkader Tigha and Mohamed Samraoui, former head of cabinet at the *Sécurité militaire* (SM), Hichem Aboud, former prisoner and student activist, Lyes Laribi, and former Minister for the Economy, Ghazi Hidouci. However, I have chosen two sources for particular attention: that of a former officer, Habib Souaïdia, and that of a civilian survivor from a village massacre, Nesroulah Yous. These two publications have attracted the most media attention, and therefore led me to considerable amounts of peripheral information. Their value is that they reinforce the widespread view of a 'dirty war', in which the military had as its unwavering objective the annihilation and disgrace of the Islamist opposition, which of course implied illegal and inhumane tactics.

This view is further reinforced by the many reports to have emerged in recent years. These are largely critical of the Algerian regime, although I endeavour to provide as balanced an assessment as possible by including, for example, the perspective of the military as per Khaled Nezzar (former Minister for Defence and

⁵ Frédéric Volpi, 'L'islam, la nation et la politique : le passé de bien plus d'une illusion', in Naaman Kessous, Christine Margerrison, Andy Stafford and Guy Dugas (eds), *Algérie, vers le cinquantième de l'Indépendance : regards critiques* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), pp. 183–200, p. 183.

senior general involved in the coup of January 1992), and the official report made to the UN by the Algerian government in 1998. One of the most active Algerian bodies that monitor developments is Algeria-Watch, whose website (www.algeria-watch.org) is a highly valuable store of articles and reports, although there is a clear bias for material that can be used to condemn the regime. This is largely representative of the reality reflected in most of the human rights organisations that have published reports on Algeria. This is not a criticism, but merely an observation: the fact is that reports of human rights abuses during the conflict are widespread, and it would appear certain that the regime was at the very least negligent in its protection of civilians, if not positively complicit in the atrocities committed. The inclusion of references to groups like Amnesty International, the *Ligue algérienne de la défense des droits de l'homme* (LADDH), the *Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme* (FIDH), and Human Rights Watch is not intended as a thorough analysis of the legal issues involved, but reinforces the very serious allegations made by Souaïdia, Yous and others. Furthermore, my inclusion of a final section detailing the relationship between the UN and the Algerian government offers a damning account of the regime's failures. The distinction between reports by NGOs and the UN should not be under-estimated: when the UN Human Rights Committee says it is 'appalled' by the level of violence and 'deeply concerned' by the state's negligence, this is of far more serious import than the most critical of NGO reports.

Contributions to the field

My conclusion to this thesis offers further discussion of future research paths that I would like to see explored, but what contribution does the present work offer? As I have said, this thesis has been produced within the field of French Studies, but with a

clear emphasis on politics. Specifically within French studies, therefore, its contribution is to offer an explicitly political reading of Algeria's recent history. This is significant as there would appear to me to be a heavy bias in French Studies towards cultural and/or philosophical analysis, particularly where the former colonies—or 'Francophone' world—is concerned. By this I mean that much of the analysis within the field either emphasises literary or other artistic contributions to our understanding of postcolonial life, or uses philosophical theories to express the complexity of postcolonial identity. This work is highly valuable; it has played an important role in highlighting, for example, the prolific and diverse artistic voices of non-Western cultures, and it has encouraged exciting new theoretical perspectives on issues like the distribution of world power, language and identity.⁶ My position with regard to this work is not critical. While I highlight the regrettable absence within French Studies of a political focus on the former French colonies, this is not intended to undermine the contribution of postcolonial studies. Rather, it is intended as an encouragement of parallel developments within French Studies towards a greater *political* understanding of the Francophone world. It is my belief that students of French are under-exposed to analysis of political life outside metropolitan France, and it is my hope that this work might redress this in some small way.

More generally, this work offers a nuanced assessment of the FIS that builds on the analysis already available. As my sources reveal, the view that the FIS was unfairly demonised is quite common, and an even more widespread view is that the acts of the Algerian regime were grossly negligent and determined by the selfish

⁶ Readers may wish to refer to the following reference works: Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2005); Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001); Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction* (London: Arnold, 2003); Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, *Postcolonial Thought in the French-Speaking World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009); Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2006). For a good example of the philosophical applications of postcolonial studies, see Michael Syrotinski, *Deconstruction and the Postcolonial: At the Limits of Theory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007).

interests of a small but powerful elite. It has been well established that like the FLN the FIS exploited nationalism, but perhaps lacking in the available literature is the view that the FIS' expression of nationalism was an important step away from the FLN's self-serving, statist nationalism. Chapter I emphasises this distinction, identifying a 'subtle but significant shift'. Chapter II introduces what I also feel is an original viewpoint: the pertinence of the communitarian-liberal debate in political theory has not to my knowledge been raised in relation to the emergence of Islamism. Another notable absence from the literature is the view that the FIS' overt politicisation is commendable and not merely a sign of its ideological contradictions, as analysts like Addi and Roy argue. My depiction of the FIS as a balanced party is intended to emphasise that its politicisation represented another subtle but significant shift—away from apolitical fundamentalism towards political Islam, or Islamism—and that this balance was the key to its legitimacy.

The final element of this work which I hope will be a welcome contribution to the study of recent events in Algeria is the level of detail introduced in its latter half, particularly in Chapter IV. By focusing on events like the massacre in Bentalha, the controversy over Habib Souaïdia's claims, and the interaction between the UN and the Algerian government, I hope to encourage a greater level of scrutiny on the very opaque history of Algeria's recent official conduct. This should be a particularly useful contribution for readers from the Anglophone world, as the vast majority of analysis of such events has so far come from France and Algeria.

Thesis structure

I have opted for a thesis structure that offers a balance between theoretical and contextual analysis. The first two chapters provide the theoretical framework within

which my ideas have developed, while Chapters III and IV provide details of the political and military environments in which the FIS emerged and was ultimately defeated. It is my hope that this balance will provide the theoretical nuances necessary for a fresh interpretation of this party, as well as the supporting evidence necessary for academic rigour.

Chapter I

Chapter I begins by framing the emergence of Algerian Islamism in the context of nation-building. This is not intended as a catch-all explanation for the rise of the FIS, but allows us to consider the Islamists' role in society as one that builds on rather than undoes the Algerian nation as established under the FLN. Using the theories of Anthony Smith on nationalism and national identity, I begin by showing how modern nation-building can require a *balance* between the imperatives of the nation-state and the older unifying elements of a people. Smith tells us this is because nations are more than purely modern constructs, and their success depends not only on the political and diplomatic work done by the state but also on centuries of national consolidation. In the case of Algeria, I argue that the FIS may have represented this balance by seeking to bridge the country's ancient Islamic heritage and its modern voice as an independent nation. This would have complemented rather than supplanted the role of the FLN. As the party that gave Algeria her independence but also emphasised Islam as a common bond among the people, the FLN may be said to have respected this blend between modern national identity and historic essence. However, the critique made by the Islamic reformers, and later the FIS, is that the FLN failed in its mission as it increasingly co-opted the Algerian heritage to reinforce its own legitimacy. This meant that the blend of Islamic nationalism it promoted was in the service of the state and not the Algerian nation.

That the FLN behaved in this way is not surprising, however. Section 1.2 looks at contributions from various analysts who have studied the difficulties of political life in the aftermath of independence. We see how the newly-independent state struggles to forge loyalty and unity, often taking on an overbearing role in an effort to ensure the success of its nationalist model. This explains the potential for conflict between state and nation: where identity is fragile or uncertain, as in an emerging political entity, the official or dominant expression of this identity, embodied by the state, may meet with opposition from competing interpretations and representations. The increasing hegemony of the FLN state met with such opposition in the form of political Islam. Although by no means the only explanation for the FIS' success—one might also cite social or economic inequality, the success of the Iranian revolution, moral decline, administrative corruption, cultural 'Westernisation', or a shifting world order with the decline of communism—this analysis allows us to see the Islamists not as an obscurantist force, but as a movement with its finger on the pulse of a society that no longer recognised itself in the nation forged by its political representatives. By tapping into nationalist sentiment, but in the context of Islamic heritage, the FIS offered an important yet subtle shift away from state-sanctioned (and state-serving) nationalism and towards a more popular expression of Algerian identity.

This view of Islamism as a constructive rather than destructive force is also at the heart of Section 2 of my first chapter. Here, I examine the often fraught relationship between religion and politics, arguing that the two are not as mutually exclusive as is often thought. With the rise of religious belief worldwide, it is no longer reasonable to assume that secular political systems will continue to emerge as the dominant force, and on that basis we probably need to review our relationship with politicised

religious values.⁷ For if we continue to see public and political manifestations of these values as a threat to stability, then the world may indeed become highly unstable (if it is not already). Such is my approach when assessing Algerian Islamism and the admixture of religion and politics more generally: a blanket refusal to admit this alloy into the modern political mould can only lead to further instability and injustice. I defend this view in greater detail from a theoretical point of view in Chapter II, and contextually in Chapter III, where I show that the FIS respected the legality of political opposition. In my first chapter, however, I wanted to begin with a definition of fundamentalism that would emphasise openness and the importance of eschewing prejudice. I do this by highlighting the origins of the term outside of the Muslim world and also by arguing for a more literal definition: fundamental belief in the tenets of a given system, whether philosophical, social, economic, political or theological.

That fundamentalism includes the political is an essential tenet of my thesis, which argues for the acceptance of actors like the FIS onto the political stage. For they are fundamentalist—although, as I explain, they represent a particular type of fundamentalism: Islamism. This is a political embodiment of (fundamental) religious adherence and as such represents another important shift—away from passive fundamentalism (as practiced by certain non-violent, apolitical believers) and towards its political application. This was significant in the Muslim world more widely, as it consolidated the increasing politicisation of society that had begun with the colonial confrontation between Europe and Islam, and in Algeria specifically, where I show that the predecessors of the FIS—men like Ben Badis and Cheikh Sahnoun and Soltani—expressed their fundamental beliefs outside of the political

⁷ One recent publication has focused on the growth of religious populations worldwide and the impact this might have on politics: Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth?: Demography and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Profile, 2010).

sphere. I provide historical information on the significance of these Islamic reformists in order to trace a link between that earlier movement and modern Islamism. By showing that the FIS built on two existing legacies (nationalism and reformism), I therefore suggest that its emergence was less of a rupture than was feared by so many.

Chapter II

It is clear that parties like the FIS are perceived as a threat to or a rupture from stable political models. In order to rebut this perception, in Chapter II I set out to challenge restricted or prejudiced interpretations both of modern democracy and political Islam. This is a vast endeavour, so I have limited my analysis to a few select vantage points. After briefly discussing the problems associated with defining democracy, I go on to refer to the work of political theorists who have focused on the role of *community* in democracies. This work belongs to the liberal-communitarian debate, which, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, sought to clarify the apparent dichotomy between liberal emphasis on individual rights, individual lifestyles, individual gain, individual beliefs, etc. and the apparent desire in some societies for public policy to take account of unifying, community-based values. I chose this segment of political theory because, although it is not concerned with the Muslim world as such, it nonetheless reflects a debate that is central to political Islam, or Islamism.⁸ Islamists emerge in many different political contexts, and should be understood in relation to their individual objectives, but they all share a desire to attenuate the harmful effects of ‘Westernisation’, with its individualist emphasis. This translates into a greater role for community, which is at the heart of Muslim society. By showing that this debate has taken place within Western democratic theory independently of any concerns about Islam, I therefore argue that at least one

⁸ I use these terms interchangeably.

element of Islamism is not as unfamiliar as it may seem, and that it need not undermine democracy as we know it.

This approach is fundamentally about questioning the impenetrability of the Western democratic paradigm. It seems to me that by refusing to recognise the capacity of Islamist groups for democratic action, one weakens rather than strengthens the appeal of democracy. To take an obvious example, the refusal by key members of the international community such as the US and EU to deal with Hamas in Palestine is a clear message that democratic participation comes with conditions that extend beyond electoral success. Similarly, for the authorities to have denied the FIS its victory at the polls in December 1991 because of fears that Algerian democracy was under threat makes a mockery of the democratic model as favoured by that regime and its Western backers. This is the approach I adopt in my analysis of three French-language political scientists who have written extensively on political Islam: Lahouari Addi, Olivier Roy and François Burgat. I challenge Addi and Roy on the basis of their restricted interpretations of what is admissible in the modern political order, while in the work of Burgat, who is a champion of the Islamists' right to democratic participation, I emphasise his tendency to underplay the significance of Islam in this movement.

Of the three men, Addi, who is Algerian-born but now works in metropolitan France, has written the most about Algeria specifically. His analysis is very useful in understanding the state structures (economic, judicial, political and, above all, military) that have functioned with more or less success since independence, and his knowledge of the political apparatus appears to be excellent. However, I have chosen to focus on his ideological assessment of the Islamist movement, as it is here that he operates what I term a *barrier to entry* into the democratic model. By insisting on the irreversible rise of the individual as a condition of modernity, Addi effectively rejects

the political model offered by the FIS, which sought to renew social fraternity and combat the sense of isolation brought on by the increasing individualisation of society, particularly in urban areas. Such an objective, particularly when linked to the restoration of moral order, is incompatible with Addi's depiction of the modern world, which he says cannot aspire to a 'utopian' blend of the sacred and the profane. The main problem with such a model, according to Addi, is that the role of religion in society should not extend into the quest for power, as this would undermine faith and put unfair pressure on voters to give political support to 'divine' parties. Yet Addi himself recognises that Islam cannot be depoliticised: unlike in the Christian faith, where a clear hierarchy operates, Muslims are all free to act as spokespersons for their belief system, and this pervades both political and apolitical life. This ultimately implies that parties like the FIS have to abandon either their spiritual foundation or their political ambitions; Addi's analysis therefore obstructs rather than encourages the emergence of new democratic forces in the Muslim world.

Similarly, Olivier Roy interprets the nature of Islamism in a way that precludes its participation in democratic politics. His 'Failure of political Islam' thesis depicts this movement in such a way that no matter what shape it takes, it is doomed to failure: if it adapts to the modern political model (institution-based governance and secular society), he says it will not have lived up to its revolutionary rhetoric, but its 'totalising' model of social change based on moral rectitude cannot work either, as there is evidence, he says, that Islam is enjoying renewal independently of the formal Islamist network. This, he suggests, shows that Islamism cannot claim to monopolise the expression of 're-islamisation', although it is unclear that the movement ever displayed such an ambition. Ultimately, Roy's analysis is more concerned with rigid definitions than political fairness. His attempts to undermine the credibility of Islamism because of its weak ideology and its failure to re-shape the geopolitical

boundaries of the Muslim world disguise the impact it has had on political conditions on the ground. By focusing in part on the unrealistic nature of the rhetoric employed by Islamists, he reaches the conclusion that their fitness to govern must be questioned. But I would argue that a focus on the behaviour of individual parties aspiring to take part in elections is a more productive approach.

In the work of both Addi and Roy, we find varying degrees of hostility to the idea of Islamist governance. François Burgat, by contrast, has always supported the principle that overtly Islamic parties should be admitted into the political sphere. My analysis of his work therefore pays considerable attention to the ways in which he calls for a greater level of acceptance and openness to new political modes of expression. His fundamental perspective is that there is an inherent unfairness in the global distribution of political power, and specifically that non-Western voices (e.g. Islamists) should be allowed to compete with those who have held a monopoly on political expression. In the short-term, this would facilitate political change in the Middle East and the rest of the Islamic world, but it would also have a long-term impact on global perceptions of politics: the *endogenous* references (e.g. to Islamic concepts such as *shura*, or consultation) employed by Islamist actors to compete on their national terrain would gradually feed into political discourse generally, and the cultural porousness of the modern world would at last manifest itself on the global ideological terrain that has historically been dominated by the West. I find myself drawn to Burgat's work because of its consistent support for would-be political representatives who have been disadvantaged by an unfair distribution of power. His belief that politics would survive a certain amount of subversion by emerging forces is, I think, correct. However, I try to bring a nuance to his analysis: in his attempt to convince readers of the acceptability of Islamism, it seems that he underplays the very real Islamic basis upon which its proponents wish to build their political model,

arguing instead that their ambitions are in reality profane. The irony of this is that while emphasising the need to embrace non-Western modes of expression, he appears to reassure his (mostly Western) readers that the invocation of Islam is more a political tool than an ideological commitment. Such a tactic is problematic as it risks alienating those Islamists who would otherwise be drawn to work that offers principled support to their movement, and it undermines Burgat's own emphasis on openness and difference.

Chapter II ends with an analysis of two issues: the problem of popular sovereignty in political Islam, and the question of legitimacy. First, I address the apparent conflict between divine and popular sovereignty, arguing that these need not necessarily exclude one another. Looking again at the work of Lahouari Addi, we see how he traces the process of democratisation back to the debate on sovereignty and how his views ultimately reflect this process as experienced in a European context, that is to say in the context of popular challenges to the divine authority embodied by the Church. Although he is careful to emphasise circumstantial differences in the cases of Europe and the Maghreb, he concludes that any popular desire for democratisation could never be fulfilled by a party like the FIS, which failed to reconcile its rhetoric on divine sovereignty with the imperatives of governance. For Addi sees the two as incompatible: it is a question of which form of *legitimacy* a party enjoys—religious *or* electoral. He insists that the two cannot coincide, but I submit that this approach is misguided for two reasons. First, it is unrealistic to speak of bringing legitimacy to government where there has been no legitimacy to begin with. The political upheaval required to replace the FLN regime with a pluralist democracy implied considerable risk: the FIS may well have proven to be poor governors, but to delegitimise them on the basis of an apparent ideological inconsistency is not helpful, especially when legitimacy was so clearly lacking from

the FLN regime in the first place. Yet this is what Addi, Roy and others set out to do. Secondly, there is a wider problem in the debate on Islamists' fitness to govern: those who analyse parties like the FIS in purely political terms will never communicate successfully with the Islamists themselves, as the points of departure on each side of the debate are so different. Once again, it would be more helpful to push for inclusion, pluralism and free elections than to operate intellectual barriers to entry that ultimately preserve the status quo of hermetic political systems.

Chapter III

Having argued in favour of inclusive democratic models from a theoretical standpoint, I move on in Chapter III to a more contextual analysis of the FIS. The intention here is to show that because of its broad cooperation with the state and because of its conscious shift towards overtly political action, this party earned its place in the electoral process. Without wishing to underplay its combative stance (the FIS was implicitly hostile to the existing balance of power), I try to depict a party that respected the legality of political opposition and acted with increasing maturity, flexibility and moderation in the period following President Chadli Bendjedid's decision to make the constitutional shift to pluralism, that is to say from October 1988 onwards.

I begin this chapter by showing that the early emergence of political Islam in Algeria was necessarily problematic, as a diverse current of opposition to the state had to be consolidated under coherent leadership. In particular, the transition from apolitical opposition, as represented by men like Cheikhs Soltani and Sahnoun, to political representation implied certain challenges: Who would lead such a movement? How best to garner maximum electoral support? What policies to adopt? How best to relate to the existing state apparatuses? The reality is that these

questions were not answered with clarity at first. As this chapter shows, it was only as the FIS consolidated its leadership and discourse under the Djaz'ara, the party's nationalist and moderate branch, that it displayed political maturity and unity. Whether this was in fact necessary for electoral success can only be the subject of speculation. In the June 1990 elections, considerable uncertainty still remained. The FIS had been reluctant to provide a clear political programme and its bicephalous leadership (Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj) at times appeared to represent different political views, yet its success at the polls was unequivocal. In any case, by the December 1991 elections, it was clear that the party was dominated by its more moderate members.

Chapter III provides details of this shift. It reveals a clear preference within the FIS for populist politics, as analysis of the party's strategy, constituency and leadership shows. Its strategy was based on popular appeal, with heavy exploitation of mosques around the country. Its constituency was largely made up of the urban poor, and efforts were made to retain mass appeal, even where this appeared contrary to the FIS' natural alliances (see the example of the Gulf War). Its leadership, finally, marked a clear preference for populism and political will. The supremacy of venerable Abassi and fiery Belhadj over and above the party's executive body (*Majlis al-Shura*) was effective in exciting voters, and the definitive shift towards domination by the Djaz'ara in July 1991 was a clear indication that the party leadership should reflect political maturity.

Pragmatism and canny political alliances marked the FIS' approach, and I examine the ambivalent relationship it maintained with the existing state structures, notably how it sometimes mirrored and compared itself to the FLN, how it cooperated with Chadli's administration, and how it respected legality, while at the same time challenging the state in a way that no other party had done. The central

idea in this thesis is that the FIS offered a significant but not seismic shift in Algerian politics. It sought to alter the political landscape, dominated by the military-bureaucratic FLN, without reversing the progress that had been made on the strength of the state's revolutionary legitimacy. This is reflected in the FIS' relationship with the FLN, a relationship that was marked by a greater level of understanding than is sometimes appreciated. To say there were similarities between the two parties is nothing new. It is no secret that, like the FLN, the FIS sought to capitalise on the legitimacy of the revolution, or that both parties employed a populist discourse. I discuss these similarities, but I am careful to emphasise the limits of such a comparison, arguing that despite drawing strength from the FLN's existing legitimacy, the FIS was nonetheless trying to redefine the boundaries of political action. By challenging the state's official or institutional Islam, and by using the mosque as the locus for political impetus, the Islamists sought to change the relationship between Algeria's governed and governors.

This could not be done by the FIS alone, however. Abassi and Belhadj needed to cooperate with the incumbent government and develop sympathies within the establishment if they were to effect this kind of change. And the details of how this was done offer great insights that show the FIS operating at the heart, rather than on the margins, of the political apparatus. They also show how the unity of this apparatus under Chadli was already extremely fragile, as the apparent manipulation and scheming reveal. Section 2 of Chapter III therefore examines some of the speculation surrounding the President's strategic decisions in an effort to learn more about his relationship with the FIS and thereby draw conclusions about how the party behaved politically.

In particular, this involves the controversy over the riots in October 1988, which led to a constitutional amendment authorising the formation of political parties. This

episode took place in a climate of deep suspicion, and there has been much speculation about who was behind it and why. Although I do not reach any definitive conclusion about this, I emphasise that Chadli was the ultimate beneficiary of the people's anger. The view that he played a role in encouraging the riots is supported by at least three facts: he had spoken of reforms long before October, but required fundamental structural change to bring these about; he made a speech just days before the outbreak of violence in which he appeared to provoke public dissent; and despite rumours that unrest was imminent, the security forces played a minimal role, at first, and then acted with brutality in suppressing the violence. Both their inaction and excessive use of force resulted in massive public anger. Because the internal opposition facing the President came from those who favoured a strong military, it is suggested that he benefited from the anger directed at the security forces in the aftermath of the repression. In line with other commentators, I therefore suggest it is most likely that Chadli was endeavouring to create the right conditions for the emergence of political opposition that would undermine his opponents within the FLN.

This analysis is consistent with what happened after Black October. I go on to show how the rise of the FIS was facilitated by Chadli's administration, with tacit cooperation on both sides. From the legalisation of the FIS—which the President could have refused on legal grounds—to the state's hands-off attitude towards the Islamists' successful operations (replacement of state services, political exploitation of mosques), it was clear that a strategic relationship quickly developed between the two parties. This tells us much about the extent to which the FIS was willing to engage in political manoeuvring, and is a crucial factor in my assessment of it as a balanced and moderate party. This is perhaps even clearer, however, from the behaviour of the party once the period of apparent cooperation ended.

Section 3 examines the evolution of the FIS from March 1991 onwards. It was at this time that relations became more overtly hostile between the Islamists and Chadli's administration, as the parliament adopted new electoral laws that would penalise the FIS. The event that most clearly marked this hostility was the 'general strike' called by Abassi on 23 May. The party's capacity for mobilisation was a crucial show of strength and allowed Abassi to reinforce his personal leadership. It also allowed him to generate new momentum in the run-up to the December elections. Most significantly in the context of this thesis, however, it proved the FIS' capacity for legal protest and respect for public order. Contrary to the assertions of some commentators, the demonstrations of June 1991 were not an attack on the state. My analysis highlights the FIS' cooperation with the authorities and relative passivity of its members, in stark contrast to the political bullying tactics of senior military officers and the aggression of the security forces. The reaction of the military to these demonstrations would appear to have portended its intervention in January 1992. Indeed, it continued to clamp down on the FIS even after the event; this culminated in the arrests of both Abassi and Belhadj. Similarly, the behaviour of the FIS at this time reflected its subsequent evolution towards legalism and moderation, as my analysis of post-1992 events clearly shows.

Despite the chaos that beset the Islamist movement in the aftermath of the coup, mainly due to the growth of radicalism in response to the perceived injustice, the FIS maintained a firm commitment to dialogue and compromise. It lost many of its members to the *maquis*, and several hundred of its political representatives were placed in detention camps in the south of the country. It would be incorrect to say that the party was able to operate coherently despite these losses; with its two historic leaders incarcerated, a clear direction was difficult to adopt. However, as the conflict continued, I show how it distanced itself from its most radical elements and engaged

in a process of attempted negotiations. With support from diverse segments of society (mainstream political parties, the *ulama* and the party's many voters), Abassi and Belhadj were able to meet with President Zeroual and other government representatives in a climate of potential reconciliation, but it would appear that the 'eradicators' within the regime yielded sufficient power to cut short these overtures. The same fate awaited the Sant'Egidio platform, a document signed by all of Algeria's main political parties in 1995. The refusal by the regime of this proposal for a solution was, I suggest, the definitive rejection of the compromise and political respectability offered by the FIS.

Chapter IV

It would appear that the regime's rejection of political Islam under the FIS formed part of a wider military campaign to eradicate this movement during the conflict. Chapter IV examines this campaign in an effort to show how it disfigured the original political opposition which so nearly came to power in December 1991. By looking at some of the claims made against the armed forces, we can appreciate the scale of the violence, and also understand *why* there is such widespread belief that the war was 'dirty', i.e. not what it seemed. I hope to shed some light on the complex relationships between the different protagonists, and, given this complexity, I argue for a careful reading of the 'facts'.

The analysis of five cases dominates this chapter: two publications in which the regime is accused of orchestrating 'Islamist' violence, one by a former officer, Habib Souaïdia, and one by a survivor of a 1997 massacre, Nesroulah Yous; the 'Islamist' assassination in June 1992 of President Mohamed Boudiaf; a defamation trial, held in Paris, between Souaïdia and a senior Algerian General; and the interaction during the conflict between the United Nations Human Rights Committee and the state of

Algeria. The diverse evidence this analysis throws up is largely damning: it suggests total disregard for human life in a war where military leaders plotted to pass off their own crimes as those of the Islamist resistance in an effort to discredit this movement generally and remain in power. This implies complete disdain on the part of the state for its obligations under international law.

Souaïdia's account of the conflict is particularly useful as it provides inside knowledge of the military apparatus. He describes systemic hostility to the Islamist movement, encouraged and even demanded by senior officers. This, he says, even extended to Islam itself, as those in the armed forces who openly practiced their faith were treated with increasing suspicion. He also suggests that the war was very much planned—that recruitment and deployment were accelerated well ahead of the January 1992 intervention. This reinforces my analysis in Chapter III, where we see how the repression of June 1991 was a foreboding sign of things to come. Most crucially, however, Souaïdia provides one of the most credible testimonies about the military role in propagating and orchestrating the violence. He offers numerous examples of extra-judicial killings, torture, and staged 'Islamist' attacks that he says were in fact the work of officers disguised as resistance fighters, or 'terrorists'. Although shocking, this allegation is consistent with the other evidence examined in this chapter. My endeavour is not simply to display this evidence, but to explain why it is credible in respect of my overall thesis, i.e., that a legitimate and democratic force capable of renewing Algeria's vitality was first denied access to the political stage, and then discredited in the long term by contrived association with mindless violence.

Taken alone, Souaïdia's claims might be difficult to accept unconditionally, but reports of state-sanctioned violence in the 1990s are so numerous as to be overwhelming. I have spoken of the discredit that the regime sought to inflict upon

its enemies; this makes it clear that *legitimacy* was the ultimate prize in this conflict. And there is no better example of this than the illegitimate establishment of a High State Committee (*Haut comité d'Etat* – HCE) under Mohamed Boudiaf in January 1992, and the President's assassination just a few months later. Widely seen as a putsch, the cancellation of the second round of elections badly damaged the regime's image, and it was therefore necessary to give the new government some degree of legitimacy. An attempt was made to do this by bringing in a man of unquestioned historic legitimacy due to his role in the revolution of 1954. Whether this was successful in the eyes of the people is hard to ascertain, but what is certain is that in office Boudiaf behaved in a way that did anything but reinforce the legitimacy of his sponsors. His attacks on corruption emphasised the hollow authority of those who had denied the electorate its choice, and it would appear that his assassination came from the very people who had encouraged him to return to political life. The killing was carried out by an officer from Boudiaf's security cortège who had allegedly acted on behalf of the Islamist resistance. The evidence, however, suggests that the decision was made internally. The complexity of the search for legitimacy is well illustrated in this case: legitimacy was the motivation of the regime in using a recognised revolutionary; legitimacy is what motivated the President in his attempts to root out corruption; and the legitimacy of the repression was the goal behind the staged 'Islamist' killing.

The case of the massacre in the village of Bentalha, south of Algiers, is a grim reminder of the brutality of the conflict. And if Nesroulah Yous' testimony is to be accepted, then it is also an indication of the lengths to which the regime was prepared to go in its efforts to secure its militaristic monopoly on political power. This publication proved to be a particularly fruitful resource, as it led me to a wide range of related material, Bentalha being one of the most infamous massacres to have taken

place during the war. The publicity it generated was reflected in the subsequent journalistic investigations carried out by two French philosophers, Bernard-Henri Lévy and André Glucksmann,⁹ as well as the attention given to an award-winning press photograph often referred to as *La pietà de Bentalha* for its Madonna-like portrayal of one of the survivors.¹⁰

Yous establishes a solid foundation for his central allegation that the armed forces were at least complicit in, if not directly responsible for, the attack. This relies on his personal experience on the night in question (things overheard or observed, second-hand testimony) but also on indisputable fact, such as the authorities' failure to intervene despite a heavy military presence in the immediate vicinity. I provide details of these, with additional information from other sources where possible, including an explanation by one senior General as to why the armed forces failed to protect their citizens. My aim is not simply to relay to readers the case being made against the regime, however; I wanted to ask what makes these claims credible. What can the testimonies of people like Souaïdia and Yous tell us about the complex relationship between the protagonists? How is it conceivable that the authorities, even if we accept the thesis that they wanted to discredit the Islamist movement, could have butchered their own civilians in cold blood? The answer may be that large sections of the population, as is so often the case in civil strife, were caught in between the two sides of the conflict: no longer supporters of the wayward Islamist movement, which had betrayed its political beginnings in favour of radicalism, and inherently mistrustful of the state that had let them down for so long, they could look to neither protagonist for protection and their lives were devalued as a result.

⁹ Bernard-Henri Lévy, 'Choses vues en Algérie', *Le Monde*, 8 & 9 January 1998; André Glucksmann, 'Ce que j'ai vu en Algérie : Carnets de route d'André Glucksmann', *France 3*, 6 March 1998.

¹⁰ This photo can be viewed at <http://www.archive.worldpressphoto.org> (select the link to 1997). For analysis of the image and how it was interpreted, readers may wish to refer to Pierre-Alban Delannoy, *La Pietà de Bentalha : étude du processus interprétatif d'une photo de presse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005).

The next segment of this chapter relates to the defamation trial between General Khaled Nezzar, former Minister for Defence, and Habib Souaïdia. In the interest of balanced analysis, I used this trial in order to consider what factors, if any, might attenuate the credibility of the claims made against the regime. The General's own account of events is one potential source. I examine the methods he employs to refute some of the wider claims made against the military, but the result is unconvincing. There is very little substantive evidence provided by Nezzar that would undermine these claims. However, I address one point of his in particular. He accuses a broad network of writers, journalists, commentators and other interested parties of blindly propagating the thesis that the army was behind all the violence. I look at one such example to see if there is any real cause for concern about how this thesis is constructed and presented. The case of François Gèze, director of the publishing house, La Découverte, is a good illustration of the potential pitfalls of analysis of recent events in Algeria. The uncertainty surrounding the conflict is largely due to the regime's resolute refusal to allow an international inquiry; as such, it raises suspicion in itself. However, perhaps this does not justify the kind of aggressive editorial approach adopted by Gèze, who has himself contributed to some of the La Découverte publications that attack the regime. Indeed, his role as a prominent figure in the network of French and Algerian intellectuals who denounce the military may be seen as incompatible with his position as editor. This is ultimately a minor point, however, and one that can hardly be used to refute the evidence of massive abuse on the part of the Algerian authorities. While it serves as a reminder of the need for careful analysis, it in no way detracts from the central point of this chapter: that the initial rejection of the FIS on the political stage degenerated into a brutal and concerted plot to rid Algerian politics of any serious challenge to the military hegemony over state governance in the long term.

That the authorities' conduct can be questioned is made clear in the final section of this chapter, which focuses on the relationship between the Algerian state and the UN. Specifically, I examine the state's report to the UN Human Rights Committee and the Committee's subsequent responses. This analysis shows that at the very least, the state's obligations under international law appear not to have been met. It remains uncertain whether it was responsible for deliberately propagating or actually committing the atrocities, but the unusually harsh language of the Committee's concluding observations is an indication of its failure to rebut the claims made against it.

Chapter I: Nation-Building, Politics, Religion and the FIS

*Chaîne prestigieuse où les
générations ont soudé, bout à bout,
leurs efforts et leurs contradictions et
le résultat de tout cela : le progrès
incessant ! – Malek Bennabi¹*

Section 1 – Theories of nation-building and post-independence

Algeria

This section takes the work of Anthony Smith and applies certain elements of his theories of nation-building to the case of Algeria. It then assesses the challenges of this nation-building process in the aftermath of colonial occupation. The state of Algeria today can better be understood in terms of nation-building than through the postcolonial framework alone, although the field of postcolonial studies does incorporate analysis of the nation.² By ‘postcolonial framework’, I mean an analytical perspective that assesses Algeria primarily as a former colony. My approach, by contrast, is to consider the colonial dimension as just one of the elements that have shaped modern Algeria. National identity is a concept that is not tied to one particular event in history: it may be fed more by certain key events (revolution or war, for example, and of course colonisation) than by others, but its reach extends as far back as possible into an identifiable past, for a shared identity is all the more credible when built up over a long period. However, a postcolonial analysis of contemporary politics, while it inevitably deals with the problem of

¹ Malek Bennabi, *Les Conditions de la renaissance algérienne : le problème d’une civilisation* (Algiers: Editions Algériennes « En-Nahda », 1949), p. 13.

² See for example: Lowell W. Barrington, *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1993); Imre Szeman, *Zones of Instability: Literature, Postcolonialism and the Nation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003).

nation-building, necessarily attaches singular importance to the occupation of one land by an external power at a given time. The problem here is one of objectivity and credibility: for Western analysts to take European intervention (colonisation) as the pivotal moment in understanding the former colonies is clearly problematic, as it places the West at the centre of an endeavour to learn more about the non-West. This is not to say that postcolonial studies as a discipline is ethnocentric: many postcolonial critics have themselves highlighted the danger of over-emphasising the centrality of Western intervention in the postcolonial world. Nicholas Harrison, for example, asks ‘whether a “postcolonial” perspective on colonialism and the “colonial era” is liable [...] to be drawn into and reinforce the globalizing, self-mythologizing and ethnocentric tendencies of colonialism itself’.³ And the discipline as a whole, with its ‘post-’ prefix, might be identified as a critical stance that subverts or rejects colonialism and the ongoing manifestations of it in the form of neo-colonialism.⁴

Although it is impossible for a European scholar to completely avoid a Eurocentric perspective, my approach throughout this thesis is to remain open to non-European realities, i.e., those that led to the election of the FIS in the 1990s, in an effort to challenge some of the assumptions about the boundaries of politics. This, too, is why I wish to emphasise the importance of avoiding an exclusively modernist reading of nationalism, which explains my decision to focus on Smith, who as we will see insists on a wider perspective.

³ Nicholas Harrison, *Postcolonial Criticism: History, Theory and the Work of Fiction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2003), p. 8.

⁴ Richard Serrano, *Against the Postcolonial: “Francophone” Writers at the Ends of French Empire* (Oxford: Lexington, 2005), p. 4.

Section 1.1 – Smith and the nation

Smith's view of the nation is quite similar to that of several other theorists in that he identifies modern phenomena as being central to what a nation is.⁵ However, he identifies both modern phenomena and pre-modern influences in today's nationalist movements. First, let us consider his definition of the nation: 'a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members'.⁶ One notices here that race, religion and language play no explicit role in Smith's nation. Indeed, there is nothing innate about nationhood in this definition; in other words, one must *work towards* establishing a nation. To have 'an historic territory', Smith says, one must have occupied a given space where there has been mutual benefit for the land itself and for the people who used its resources and cared for it.⁷ The physical spaces shared by this population (mountains, lakes, rivers, etc.) then take on a symbolic importance that feeds into the 'common myths and historical memories', which once again suggest that the nation is a construct of the people: Smith does not speak of a shared past to which one simply belongs, but of human expressions of such a past—a conscious or unconscious interpretation and propagation of certain episodes in the public mindset. Similarly, 'a mass, public culture' is not something that can exist without direct intervention from a human population; unlike, say, racial or linguistic features, it must be *provided* or *constructed*. This, Smith says, is best achieved by the organs of media and education, which serve to include the masses in the process of nation-building:

⁵ See for example: John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985); Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

⁶ Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 43.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

[N]ations must have a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas, that bind the population together in their homeland. The task of ensuring a common public, mass culture has been handed over to the agencies of popular socialization, notably the public system of education and the mass media. In the Western model of national identity nations were seen as culture communities, whose members were united, if not made homogenous, by common historical memories, myths, symbols and traditions.⁸

The final features of Smith's nation are a common economy and equality before the law, which, while examples may be found in pre-modern times, are phenomena that have taken on widespread significance since such defining moments in the modern era as the French Revolution. They are also, of course, constructs of human endeavour and not innate qualities.

Minimally modernist: under-emphasising the role of the state

Smith describes his definition as 'admittedly quite modernist'.⁹ The reason he feels he has to *concede* such a point is that he carefully distinguishes himself from the 'modernists' in the field. Smith identifies four schools, or branches, of nationalist theory: primordialism, perennialism, modernism and—his own branch—historical ethno-symbolism.¹⁰ The first two may be placed alongside one another as they both tend to be represented by actual nationalists, as opposed to theorists of nationalism. Primordialism sees the nation as a natural entity that has inherent qualities to justify its existence, even where it is dormant or forgotten. Perennialism, while similar in that it views nations as having existed for a very long time, does not necessarily see them as existing innately. Modernism, which Smith takes particular care to critique, considers the nation as a wholly modern construct and seeks to understand it uniquely in terms of modern events, such as the French Revolution, or modern

⁸ Ibid, p. 11.

⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 8.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 7.

phenomena, such as global capitalism. For Smith, this approach is overly deterministic, as it sees nationalism as a function of political life, in other words as something that has been constructed by a small and powerful few, rather than as a phenomenon that can be traced back to pre-modern times. He argues that this approach avoids the challenging work of in-depth historical investigation and ‘preclud[es] any understanding of the popular roots and widespread appeal of nationalism’.¹¹ We will see the relevance of this critique in later analysis of nationalism in Algeria, where the political elite can be seen to have appropriated long-standing popular nationalist sentiment; it was this in large part that fuelled the strength of the opposition Islamist movement. By contrast with a modernist reading of nationalism, Smith invokes ‘historical ethno-symbolism’ in an effort to understand more about nationalism’s roots in the past: ‘what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular living past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias’.¹²

Smith thereby places ethnicity not at the heart of nationhood, but at the heart of nationalism or nation-building: he argues that while a *nation* need only have the characteristics outlined in his definition above, *nationalism* as a movement or ideology is about mobilising shared ethnicity to create a sense of unity. I suppose this to mean that a nation can exist without nationalism, but perhaps not in a modern understanding of the nation. The modern nation is less about shared characteristics *per se* than it is about officially recognising these characteristics as belonging to a distinct unit, naming that unit and defining its borders, i.e. defining what is not part of it. One might say that while the *spirit* of a nation comes from mobilising shared

¹¹ Ibid, p. 9.

¹² Ibid.

ethnicity, its *status* comes from officialdom. Smith refers to the nation as a ‘sense of belonging’, distinguishing between it and the state as follows: ‘the modern state refers to a set of autonomous and abstract institutions within a given territory; the modern nation refers to a sense of historic community associated with a unique “homeland”’.¹³ This distinction is important in the context of Algeria, where Islamism challenged the officialdom (and bankruptcy) of state nationalism and tried to replace it with something more perennial and popular, something that relied on more than the FLN’s historic role alone. It is useful to understand this distinction in terms of state vs. nation. When defined by Smith, the nation is an entity that requires a great deal of work and does not exist independently of our intervention. It requires concerted effort by large numbers of people, as well as formal authority to generate a recognisable unit. This raises the question of what precedes the nation: in other words, what does one call a nation before it has established a symbolic relationship with its physical homeland, before it has developed common myths in the mindset of its population, and before it has a recognisable public culture and common economic and judicial experiences for all? The answer may be a state. In other words, the state, comprising of organs of government and a judiciary, represents the official and political entity—the country, to use a rather more vague term. This entity has a recognised status internationally,¹⁴ but it cannot immediately claim to represent national unity; this, as we shall see in Section 1.2, requires some hard work. Indeed, there is often express confrontation between state and nation, as one commentator has remarked: ‘some of the most important sources of regional and international

¹³ Anthony D. Smith, ‘States and Homelands: The Social and Geopolitical Implications of National Territory’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 10/ 3 (1981), pp. 187–202, p. 187.

¹⁴ Burhan Ghalioun refers to the state as an ‘avatar du système international’; see Burhan Ghalioun, *Islam et politique : la modernité trahie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1997), Ch. 5, where he explains how the Muslim political order has had its ‘fraternity’ challenged by the arrival of a competitor in the form of ‘citizenship’, thereby supplanting community in favour of an emphasis on the individual. For further analysis see Chapter II.

instability clearly are rooted in contending national and ethnic claims and the failure of the state to capture the loyalties of its citizens'.¹⁵

Many analysts argue that the state precedes the nation,¹⁶ but Smith offers a crucial nuance to this view. He recognises the role of the state in allowing for the growth of national sentiments in the modern era, but asserts that ethnicity has been a powerful force for a long time and actually contributes to the emergence of the state:

The state was certainly a necessary condition for the formation of the national loyalties we recognize today. However, its operations in turn owed much to earlier assumptions about kingdoms and peoples, and to the presence of core ethnic communities around which these states were built up. [...] We are not here talking about actual descent, much less about 'race', but about the *sense* of ancestry and identity that people possess. Hence the importance of myths and memories, symbols and values, embodied in customs and traditions and in artistic styles, legal codes and institutions. [...] These *ethnies* in turn facilitated the development of homogenizing states [...] to form the relatively novel concept of the nation.¹⁷

In the context of Algeria, this view is essential if we are to understand the strength of the Islamist movement. The independent state under the FLN (and the fight for liberation under the ALN) provided the impetus for a kind of formalisation of the 'national loyalties' to which Smith and Barnett refer. However, the success of these loyalties depended on much more than state-sanctioned (modern) nationalism; it was the result of centuries of consolidation of that which the people felt defined them. And when this complex construct was limited to a tool that served to safeguard the legitimacy of the state, i.e., the ALN/FLN, then nationalist voices began to contest

¹⁵ Michael Barnett, 'Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System', *International Organization*, 49/3 (summer 1995), pp. 479–510, p. 479.

¹⁶ See for example: Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics* (New York: Continuum, 2000), Ch. 4; (in an African context) Benjamin Neuberger, *National Self-Determination in Postcolonial Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1986), Chs 2 & 3; and Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity', in *The Essential Wallerstein* (New York: New Press, 2000), pp. 293–309. Note: in Section 1.2 I refer to the theory of Benjamin Neuberger, who argues that in certain cases the nation precedes the state (*Kulturation*).

¹⁷ Anthony D. Smith, 'The Origins of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 12/3 (1989), pp. 349–56, p. 351.

this monopoly. Some of these were present from the outset, such as Hocine Aït-Ahmed's *Front des forces socialistes* (FFS), and did not voice their opposition in explicitly religious terms, but it was of course from the Islamists that the greatest challenge emerged. By tapping into the 'myths and memories, symbols and values' that had been activated in earlier movements such as Abdelhamid Ben Badis' Islamic reformism, the Islamists sought to motivate the country's core *ethnie* in an effort to challenge the FLN's monopoly on nationalist sentiment.¹⁸

Vertical and lateral *ethnies*

The key to understanding Smith's depiction of ethnicity can be found in his distinction between historically *lateral* and *vertical* ethnic communities, where he expands on the role played by ethnicity in nation-building by identifying these two types of *ethnie*.¹⁹ The former refers to groups that were normally composed of aristocracy and higher clergy. While their members were confined to the upper strata of society and tended to conquer and hold power, they nonetheless mixed with the native inhabitants, even adopted their language and customs, and were geographically dispersed. The important point is that despite this cultural porousness, they retained their elitist sense of community and myths of descent, thereby remaining unified even within the culturally foreign societies they chose to conquer. Smith cites the Normans as an example of a lateral *ethnie*. Vertical *ethnies*, on the other hand, were more popular and compact. Their shared ethnicity spread out to all social strata and classes, and social divisions that did exist were not marked by cultural difference; in other words, the members of this group were united around a common heritage. Smith cites the Irish as an example of a vertical *ethnie*. These

¹⁸ See Section 2.2 for further analysis.

¹⁹ See for example: 'Ethnic Nationalism and the Plight of Minorities', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 7/2-3 (1994), pp. 186-98; 'The Origins of Nations'; *National Identity*, Ch. 3; and *Myths and Memories of the Nation*, Ch. 2.

‘demotic’ groups share a religion-based ‘fund’ of cultural myths, symbols, memories and values that is transmitted from generation to generation, across the territory occupied by the community, and, perhaps most importantly, ‘down the social scale’.²⁰ Organised religion is therefore the vector of traditions and social bonds within vertical *ethnies*. However, while vertical communities enjoy unity through religio-ethnicity, it can be hard for them to form nations, as many of their members assume they are already and always have been a nation on the basis of their shared divine heritage.²¹ Smith takes the examples of the Arabs and the Jews, both of whom are attached to an original homeland and have a sense of ethnic solidarity. However, both have also faced geographic dispersion, which runs counter to the compactness of the modern nation. In the case of the Arabs, colonialism has also served to reinforce historical differences within the Arab world, producing a great diversity of state institutions, economic patterns and cultural influences. This goes some way to explaining the failure of pan-Arabist politics from the 1950s onwards.²² Also, in the context of this thesis, it offers an explanation as to why the dominant form of Algerian Islamism that ultimately emerged under the FIS was primarily nationalist (Djaz’ara) and not pan-Arabist (Salafist), as we will see in Chapter III. However, the key point for now (in the context of Algerian nation-building) is that impetus was required to make a more active shift towards nationhood. The theory of Smith’s ‘lateral’ and ‘vertical’ *ethnies* makes this clear, and I would like to develop it in application to Algeria, where there is evidence of both lateral and vertical ethnicity.

²⁰ Smith, ‘The Origins of Nations’, p. 352.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See for example: Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Barry Rubin, ‘Pan-Arab Nationalism: The Ideological Dream as Compelling Force’, *Journal of Contemporary History* (September 1991), pp. 535–51.

For Smith, these two ethnic types represent the two different paths by which a nation is formed. The ‘lateral’ path is state-driven; this means that the state (represented by the ‘original’ members of the *ethnie*, i.e., the aristocrats) was the main agency behind the incorporation of the other social strata into the dominant heritage: ‘Through its military, administrative, fiscal and judicial apparatus [the state] was able to regulate and disseminate the fund of values, symbols, myths, traditions and memories that formed the cultural heritage of the dominant aristocratic ethnic core’.²³ Smith calls this ‘bureaucratic incorporation’. The vertical *ethnie*, on the other hand, is one where a religio-ethnic core dominates any expression of national identity. While Smith’s ‘lateral’ path is forged by the elite holders of power who represent the state, the ‘vertical’ path to nation-building is the domain of the intelligentsia. He explains that vertical *ethnies* were traditionally dominated by divine authority, which in turn meant that the human figures closest to this authority were members of the clergy. Such a power structure implied less political activism, whereby the people felt ‘chosen’ as part of a higher plan and therefore did not feel the need to formalise their sense of identity.²⁴ What he suggests in the context of modern nation-building is that this ‘quietist’ existence must be transformed into a more active expression of national identity: ‘[T]he moment the question arises of transforming the community into a nation it is far more difficult to break out of the habitual conceptual ethnic framework and its lifestyle. Moreover, there is no internal coercive agency, no bureaucratic state, to shatter the mould’.²⁵ Therefore, while the ‘lateral’ communities have a ‘coercive agency’ in the form of a bureaucratic state to pull them towards nationhood, the ‘vertical’ communities require impetus from

²³ Smith, *National Identity*, p. 55.

²⁴ See Section 2.2 for analysis of the political quietism (a reticence, particularly in rural areas, to engage with political powers, and a view of the state as a remote body best left alone) in Muslim society.

²⁵ Smith, *National Identity*, p. 62.

another group: if the state organs do not provide this impetus, and nor do the members of the clergy, then it falls to the intelligentsia.

FIS as agent in nationalism

Smith outlines the role of the intelligentsia as he sees it. It is a role that is not without tension and subtlety: because of the need for a shift from passive acceptance of a religio-ethnic identity to active assertion of one's identity in the modern world, the intelligentsia must to some extent come into conflict with the historical bearers of tradition—the clergy. For this reason, Smith refers to a 'secularising intelligentsia', i.e., one that bridges the gap between the divine and the profane by encouraging the people to embrace and contribute to their national identity. However, this mission is not about a rejection of the past in favour of modern processes; rather it is about uniting the two in recognition of the force of historical ethnic bonds, and also of the inevitability of modernisation and rationalisation.

These redefinitions should not be seen simply as inventions or constructs of intellectuals. Rather they are attempts to marry an understanding of Western processes of forming nations with a programme of rediscovering an ethnic past or pasts that will elevate the people and their vernacular culture to centre stage, often in place of (or reinterpreting) the old religious traditions. Instead of being merely a chosen vessel of religious salvation and passive recipient of divine ordinance, the 'people' now become the source of salvation and the saints and sages of old become manifestations of the people's national genius.²⁶

The key point here is that intelligentsia-driven nationalism is neither fully primordialist nor fully modernist: the agents of the movement are to a certain extent making nationalism a function of political life—they are using shared ethnicity as an instrument to push the people towards a modern conceptualisation of national identity—but they are also drawing on, and not replacing, a collective past that

²⁶ Ibid, p.64.

makes it possible to conceive of a nation in the first place. In short, Smith's vision of 'vertical', or ethnic, nationalism in the modern era is one that accommodates both pre-modern ethnicity and modern politicking. He says of these intelligentsia:

[They] did not 'invent' a nation where none existed; they went back to the elements of an older ethnic culture and gave them a new social and political meaning, forging the lineaments of a political nation out of older demotic ethnies, by rediscovery and selective appropriation of popular myths, symbols, values, memories and traditions.²⁷

Smith's distinction between lateral and vertical *ethnies* is useful, as it provides two clear nation-types to which we can relate and which we can recognise in various cases throughout the world. However, it might also be useful to consider examples where these two models are in conflict—or even complement one another. Algeria, along with many other postcolonial states, is a case in point. The 'lateral' structure of bureaucratic incorporation described by Smith is easily recognisable in colonial Algeria, where a conquering elite maintained its cultural unity despite living among a very foreign people. It is also clear that the ethnicity of the French occupier did not filter 'down the social scale', and that the colonial 'nation' of Algeria was very much state-driven, i.e., driven by the colonial administration. This is not to say that this path to nation-building was as successful as in the more classic lateral *ethnies*; the state in metropolitan France, for example, managed to generate much greater unity than it ever could in Algeria. One explanation for this failure is of course the natural enmity that characterises foreign occupation, but it is perhaps also because Algeria is a perfect example of a vertical *ethnie*, where the organised religion of Islam could not easily be supplanted as the vector of national sentiment. Following Smith's analysis, then, it would fall to the intelligentsia (and not the state) in Algeria, in cooperation with a mobilised population, to build on a shared identity based

²⁷ Smith, 'Ethnic Nationalism and the Plight of Minorities', p. 191.

primarily on the country's Islamic heritage. This reflects the role played by the liberation fighters in the 1954–62 war, as well as that of the Islamist movement in the 1980s and 1990s. In both cases, the active participation of the people was enlisted in an effort to define national identity in terms of Islam and in opposition to foreign influence and an increasingly illegitimate state. As I will show in Section 2 of this chapter, we can trace the origins of this impetus back to colonial Algeria, when nationalism became bound up in Islamic reformism under leaders like Ben Badis. It was Islamic thinkers and activists who first provided the impetus that would allow Algeria's 'demotic' religion-based heritage to be expressed in the context of modern nationhood. This was then taken up by the nationalist leaders of the liberation war, but, crucially, was co-opted by the state once independence had been secured.²⁸ The role of the latter-day Islamists, therefore, was to challenge this co-optation; it was, as Smith might put it, to 'give a new social and political meaning' to something older, thereby 'forging the lineaments of a political nation'. More specifically, Smith's analysis reflects the role of the dominant Djaz'ara in the FIS, who were mostly educated men from Arabophone backgrounds with natural hostility towards the mostly Francophone bureaucratic and military leaders who dominated the FLN state.²⁹ They represented the new intelligentsia: they were the nation's 'counter-elites'.³⁰ As I will show in Chapter III, it was these men, more than their Salafist counterparts, who emphasised the Algerian (nationalist) specificity of their Islamic solution.

²⁸ For an analysis of this, see Hugh Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition: The Expansion and Manipulation of Algerian Islamism, 1979–1992', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds), *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 428–89.

²⁹ See Sections 1.1 and 1.2 of Chapter III for further analysis of the Djaz'ara element of the FIS.

³⁰ Mohand Salah Tah, 'Algeria's Democratisation Process: A Frustrated Hope', *Third World Quarterly*, 16/2 (1995), pp. 197–220, p. 215.

We have seen that Smith rejects a reading of nationalism that identifies only modern causes, and I agree with this assessment inasmuch as the FIS' role was to transcend the postcolonial politicking of the FLN in favour of something more profound—perhaps the 'vertical' ethnicity that truly defined Algerian nationhood. However, the fact remains that it was the FLN that defined this nationhood, at least from 1962 until 1989, when multi-party politics changed public expressions of nationalism. In respect of this, it is necessary to examine the climate in which the FLN first developed. In terms of nation-building, many challenges and tensions accompany the end of colonisation. These realities are, of course, not localised to Algeria or the colonies of the French empire; they are an evident legacy of the colonial era worldwide. A look at the work of theorists who have focused on the period following independence reveals some of the assessments one can make about the particular impact of colonisation on post-independence nation-building.

Section 1.2 – Post-independence nation-building

Inadequacy of economic analysis

Immanuel Wallerstein, an early theorist in postcolonial studies,³¹ explored some of the issues dealt with by Smith. He too sought to understand more about identity and expressions thereof, but adopted what Smith might critically have referred to as a modernist approach. For Wallerstein, identity is expressed in terms of race, nation or ethnicity, which, he says, usually implies an interpretation of identity on genetic,

³¹ Aijaz Ahmad has remarked that, although not considered a postcolonial critic as such, Wallerstein was one of many theorists to focus on the dynamics of political rule in newly independent nations around the time when decolonisation and the end of official imperial rule had become inevitable. Ahmad suggests that the contribution to the field of postcolonial studies by theorists like Wallerstein has been neglected in later years as postcolonial theory has turned to questions of a more literary and philosophical nature. See: Aijaz Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Post-coloniality', in Padmini Mongia (ed.), *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Arnold, 1996), pp. 276–93, p. 280.

socio-political or cultural grounds.³² However, he suggests that these are instruments in the hands of modern politicians, who use them to ‘invent pastness’ as a justification for maintaining or altering today’s identity-based demarcations. Indeed, he even suggests that because the past is pliant when used as a political tool, ‘it makes little difference whether we define pastness in terms of genetically continuous groups (races), historical socio-political groups (nations), or cultural groups (ethnic groups). They are all peoplehood constructs, all inventions of pastness, all contemporary political phenomena’.³³ Wallerstein goes further to say that not only are these identity markers all traits of modernity, but that they can be explained by just one, albeit crucial, feature of the modern era—‘the historical structure of the capitalist world economy’.³⁴ He proceeds to provide an explanation as to why all of these elements have developed as the expressions of ‘peoplehood’ today. On race, he argues that the axial division of labour into a core (locus of economic expansion) and a periphery (locus of primary production), a process that accompanied ‘the expansion of a Europe-centered capitalist world economy’, made for a ‘spatial differentiation’ that reinforced racial categories. In other words, the relative homogeneity of the genetic variants that existed at the time when this capitalist expansion began was maintained by the concentration in given spaces of the agents of either core or peripheral production: ‘Race, and therefore racism, is the expression, the promoter, and the consequence of the geographical concentrations associated with the axial division of labor’.³⁵ On socio-political belonging, Wallerstein again finds the answer in the capitalist world order, although this time in one of its more political manifestations—‘the interstate system’. He says there are two reasons for the shift

³² *The Essential Wallerstein*, p. 300.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 301.

³⁴ *Ibid*.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 303.

towards nationhood among sovereign states: one is that a state requires cohesion in order to ward off threats of disintegration both from within and without; the other is that the interstate system is actually an arena for expressions of power and, although quite stable, offers the possibility for *nations* to climb up through the ranks:

Inequalities that are significant and firm but not immutable are precisely the kind of processes that lead to ideologies able to justify high rank but also to challenge low rank. Such ideologies we call nationalisms. For a state not to be a nation is for that state to be outside the game of either resisting or promoting the alteration of its rank.³⁶

Finally, on ethnicity, Wallerstein also traces the development of ethnic groups to the capitalist structures at work in the world. He argues that the broad division of labour into a hierarchy where some workers lose a larger proportion of the surplus-value they generate than others has meant that people of similar labour backgrounds (or ‘household structures’—proletarianized or semi-proletarianized)³⁷ have tended to form communities (or ethnic groups) that behave differently to those around them. This process, Wallerstein argues, is inherently advantageous to the capitalist system as it makes the people themselves agents in the inequality associated with capitalism:

Different kinds of relations of production, we may assume, require different kinds of normal behavior by the workforce. Since this behavior is not in fact genetically determined, it must be taught. Work forces need to be socialized into reasonably specific sets of attitudes. The “culture” of an ethnic group is precisely the set of rules into which parents belonging to that ethnic group are pressurized to socialize their children. The state or the school system can do this of course. But they usually seek to avoid performing this particularistic function alone or too overtly, since it violates the concept of “national” equality for them to do so. [...] This therefore provides a legitimation to the hierarchical reality of capitalism that does not offend the formal equality before the law that is one of its avowed political premises. [...] Ethnicization, or peoplehood, resolves one of the basic contradictions of historical capitalism—its simultaneous thrust for theoretical equality and practical inequality.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid, p. 305.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 306.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 307.

Wallerstein's view is crucially flawed. His Marxist analysis, which links national identity—whether expressed via racial, socio-cultural or ethnical belonging—solely to politico-economic factors, is limited to an exclusively modern reading of nationhood. In the context of this thesis, at any rate, it tells us nothing about the strength of an Islamist movement that deliberately tapped into something more transcendent than the—albeit very real—consequences of global capitalism. The thrust of Smith's 'vertical' *ethnie* is that its defining characteristic trumps economic circumstance: spirituality that is shared 'down the social scale'. Indeed, this is clear from the socially heterogeneous members of the FIS, who represented various segments of society, from the urban poor to university students to educated professionals.³⁹ However, if used only in application to the nation as a *modern* phenomenon, Wallerstein's work is very insightful. Working during the period which saw so many countries reach independence in the former colonial world, he identified the difficulties for newly independent states in making the transition from political and economic dependence. We must be aware of these difficulties if we are to appreciate the mitigated success of the FLN state, and the corollary success of the FIS in opposing it.

Teething problems

Wallerstein made it clear that the political construct of a newly independent state was necessarily tied to its colonial past. He argued that a young government is above all concerned with ensuring stability and loyalty: 'Unless the power is effectively exercised by a central agency, and unless the rules of the power game are generally accepted by all the competitors, disintegration and secession become not merely

³⁹ See François Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb : la voix du Sud* (Paris: Karthala, 1988), pp. 113–7.

possible but probable'.⁴⁰ Strong, centralised power, then, is needed to counter the inevitable rise in demands for the protection of private or regional interests. Under colonial occupation, and more particularly in times of nationalist resistance, such interests are effectively subordinated to the unity of the people through the common goal of independence, but when the loyalty of the people is later sought by a government and a state whose unity and legitimacy are not vouchsafed by centuries of tradition, it can be hard for wealthier or more influential sections of society to see the benefits of interdependence and cooperation with those who belong to different religious, ethnic or racial groups. This explains (although it does not necessarily justify) why many states adopt single-party systems or even military regimes in the early years after independence: opposition groups undermine authority and act as a destructive force in a fledgling entity. In the case of Algeria, where the FLN, with close support from the military, was the country's sole political party until social unrest in 1988 forced it to accept political pluralism, the development of opposition groups did indeed lead to instability, posing the most manifest of all threats to national unity—civil war. This of course is not to say that political opposition is to be silenced in the interest of the nation; indeed, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter IV, the Algerian political elite and its indissociable military backers stand accused of hijacking the growth of legitimate opposition to the detriment of the nation. For now however, the point is that unlike in long-established democracies (where opposition is usually mounted against an incumbent government and not against the foundations of the state itself), newly-created states are particularly vulnerable to charges that the founding fathers, i.e., the country's first government, do not represent the people's

⁴⁰ Immanuel Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Independence* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 85.

best interests. And consequently, in the FLN state, if such opposition had been successful, secession may have followed.

The tactics that a government can employ to combat this precariousness—and this is the second element of the above citation by Wallerstein, i.e., ensuring the ‘rules of the power game’ are accepted by all—are diverse and may appear heavy-handed. The concentration of power in Algeria in the aftermath of independence is an illustration of this. The country’s first Prime Minister, Ahmed Ben Bella, quickly acted to establish a presidential regime and occupied all three of the country’s positions of power—President, Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.⁴¹ Wallerstein explains that once central power has been firmly established, as for example under a single-party system or military regime, or a combination of the two, the electorate and its divergent interests must then be made loyal to the emerging state.⁴² He identifies several elements that must be reunited in order for this to take place. The state must be seen to function as an economic network, which requires incentives for internal trade and penalties for those whose economic activities tend towards the disintegration of the state. An emphasis on the state’s shared traditions and history is another key element to the unity of an emerging nation and the public’s perception of its legitimacy (this is state-sanctioned nationalism at work). Another way to create a bond between the state and its people is the use of public relations (some may prefer to speak of propaganda). All of these methods were employed to some extent by the state under Ahmed Ben Bella (1962–65). In the absence of an established private bourgeoisie, the state felt it necessary to dominate all economic development, via mass nationalisation and the much-vaunted *autogestion*, a system whereby factories and farms that had been left without

⁴¹ Martin Stone, *The Agony of Algeria* (London: Hurst & Co., 1997), Ch. 2.

⁴² Wallerstein, *Africa*, pp. 85–99 (see also Chapter IX of the same publication).

managerial structures by the departure of the *colons* were self-managed by Algerian workers.⁴³ In terms of creating a sense of historic legitimacy, it is clear that the FLN established itself on a mandate as liberator of the people, as examples from any state documents show. Finally, in terms of public relations, the Algerian state in its early years ensured tight control over all means of public communication, dominating the written press, radio, television, and publishing houses.⁴⁴ In short, out of fear of disunity and in its quest for legitimacy, this state was omnipresent and all-encompassing:

[D]epuis 1962 [l'Etat] devient à la fois « l'Etat-gendarme » dépositaire du monopole de la force et de la contrainte et dont la finalité est d'assurer la reproduction la moins conflictuelle possible des rapports sociaux, « l'Etat-providence » (le Welfare State) qui prétend assurer la cohésion sociale par la réduction des inégalités et des tensions, « l'Etat-patron », qui, outre son engagement maximal dans la sphère politique, sociale et culturelle, s'approprie les principaux moyens de production et joue un rôle décisif dans le processus d'accumulation du capital.⁴⁵

What is important in this phase of newly-acquired independence is that the public be reminded that the new authorities are not an abstract and remote force, but that they have a real impact on the daily lives of each and every citizen. Perhaps one of the greatest measures of national unity is the extent to which there is a perceptible desire among citizens to see the laws of the land respected. This is not merely about individuals obeying regulations, for sufficiently draconian punishments can quite easily induce fear of state reprisal; it is about reinforcing the state's authority and legitimacy in order for the rules to be respected for their own sake, rather than for fear of the consequences of one's failure to respect them. This distinction requires

⁴³ On the extent of state intervention in economic concerns, see Amrane Ahdjoudj, *Algérie, état, pouvoir et société (1962–1965)* (Paris: Arcantère, 1991), Ch. 1. On *autogestion*, see John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), Ch. 7, where he argues that the system ultimately failed due to the inefficiency of state intervention.

⁴⁴ Ahdjoudj, p. 26.

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 25–6.

the public to identify *with* the state—a challenging reversal of the natural position of enmity that characterises colonial occupation.

Self-determination: state or nation?

Having looked at some of the teething problems encountered by a state emerging from colonial occupation, let us now take one step further back to the moment of decolonisation itself and the task incumbent upon a soon-to-be independent state—*self-determination*. This legal term refers to a political right that is provided universally by international law: ‘all peoples have the right [to] freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development’.⁴⁶ It is therefore about determining policies, essentially bestowing upon states the right to run their own affairs. But it also implies another problem: that of determining the self. In other words, to which ‘people’ does this right extend? It is evident that the task of running a state’s affairs is difficult enough in itself, but one must first agree upon the cultural, geographical, religious and ethnic boundaries within which these affairs are to be run. Benjamin Neuberger has tackled this problem in the context of postcolonial Africa. One of his conclusions is that the colonial self is very much present in the mindset of Africans and has largely contributed to the boundaries of national self-determination that today demarcate the continent’s different political entities:

The national self in Africa is most frequently defined as the former colony in its colonial boundaries. An overwhelming majority of the African political establishment affirms the importance and even decisiveness of colonial history in the building of African nations.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, Article 1, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm> [last accessed 11 March 2010].

⁴⁷ Benjamin Neuberger, *National Self-Determination in Postcolonial Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1986), p. 22.

This is doubtless attributable to the practicality of continuance more than to any desire to respect the colonial legacy, as the borders left after independence represented a *fait accompli* and could not easily be redrawn. However, it is also true that most of the boundaries in post-independence Africa were determined by ‘haphazard demarcation’ by colonial powers and did not represent entities of ethno-cultural or linguistic unity, therefore making it difficult to inspire loyalty among the newly independent citizens.⁴⁸ By necessity, then, the political elite of the formative years after independence were obliged to adopt a position of what Neuberger calls ‘statist nationalism’.⁴⁹ As discussed earlier in the context of Smith, this is whereby the concept of a nation flows from the state, rather than the state simply providing the tools of governance for a nation that already exists, and it is central to Neuberger’s understanding of nation-building in the postcolonial world. It is of course not the only model: elsewhere, he identifies three possible paths to the creation of a nation-state. The first he refers to as a *Kulturnation*:⁵⁰ this is the political entity generated by a pre-existing nation that breaks away from a larger state. Examples include Poland and Czechoslovakia, which, prior to independence from Soviet rule, by virtue of their distinct and shared heritage, were nations within a ‘multinational state’. In this case, the state flows from the nation. The second model is the *Staatsnation*: this is whereby a nation is the product of the state, as in France or Great Britain, where, Neuberger says:

[N]ationalists called upon the state system to change and adapt in order to achieve the final coincidence of states and nations. [...] In France and Britain monarchs who were

⁴⁸ Ricardo René Larémont, ‘Borders, States and Nationalism’, in R. R. Larémont (ed.), *Borders, Nationalism, and the African State* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005), pp. 1–31, p. 2. See also Saadia Touval, *The Boundary Politics of Independent Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), Ch. 1.

⁴⁹ Neuberger, *National Self-Determination*, p. 23.

⁵⁰ Neuberger cites this term, along with ‘Staatsnation’, as having been first used by Friedrich Meinecke in 1908.

not nationalists had built nations. The nation-state was the result of their policies without this ever having been their objective.⁵¹

Although it is debatable whether the nation-state in France was the product of the monarchy, or something that emerged from the popular uprising of the Revolution and the subsequent consolidation of national structures under the Third Republic and beyond, this model nonetheless acted as the forerunner of the modern nation-state and must, according to Neuberger, be distinguished from the model of postcolonial states. The postcolonial model, he says, represents the third path to nation-building. Like the *Staatsnation*, it once again involved the state as the driving force behind the process, but with one important difference: because nationalism in modern times is a major force, which was not the case when the European *Staatsnations* were being created, most African leaders are nationalists, making the creation of the nation-state a conscious objective:

All other major African leaders are [...] already part of the nationalist era. They desire to accelerate a process which lasted for hundreds of years in Britain and France because it was not propelled but merely evolved. They clearly and consciously follow the Western European way and aim to achieve a nation-state 'from state to nation'.⁵²

Neuberger's schema consolidates what I have already outlined in the case of Algeria. This is a country where nationalism was formally the product of the independent state, but where national sentiment long pre-existed the influence of the FLN. Neuberger's analysis applies to Algeria inasmuch as the state did indeed produce the modern Algerian nation, but his reminder that this process was rushed and self-conscious (rushed because Algeria's modern nationalists had to 'catch up' and self-conscious because they knew what was expected of them) provides an explanation as to why alternative expressions of nationalism came to the fore to

⁵¹ Benjamin Neuberger, 'State and Nation in African Thought', *Journal of African Studies*, 4/2 (1977), pp. 198–205, p. 200.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 203.

challenge this ‘statist’ nationalism. This is because this form of nationalism was considered to have been borrowed, or worse, imposed: ‘Ce nationalisme est une invention. L’État-nation est une invention occidentale, c’est une fixation occidentale qui nous a été imposée, que nous avons héritée du colonialisme’.⁵³

State-sanctioned history

As suggested by Wallerstein, the invocation of history is one method by which the state may intervene in order to determine a recognisable self, and thereby construct a feeling of unity and continuity. As statist nationalists, formative governments throughout Africa in the early years of independence were responsible for reinforcing the legitimacy of the political entities under their care. This required a historical narrative that showed a pre-existing identity that could be associated with the boundaries of the new nation. Certain liberties therefore needed to be taken in this interpretive work:

For nationalists, history has always meant, in fact, selective history. Nationalists, whose objective it is to foster a sense of identity and solidarity, to establish a chain of heroes, or to prove their case for a certain historical boundary, pick up those raisins from the cake of history which support and rationalize their cause.⁵⁴

In the case of Algeria, one effect of the early endeavours to promote national unity was the relative occlusion of a sizeable minority—the Berbers. Through excessive emphasis on unity, the Algerian state alienated and angered this sector of the population, which had inhabited the region long before the Arabs arrived (Berbers are the indigenous people of North Africa; they converted to Islam *en masse* in the seventh century during the Arab expansion).⁵⁵ *La Charte d’Alger*, the charter

⁵³ One of Morocco’s leading Islamist thinkers, Abdessalam Yassine, cited in Burgat, *L’Islamisme au Maghreb*, p. 43.

⁵⁴ Neuberger, ‘State and Nation in African Thought’, p. 203.

⁵⁵ See Phillip Naylor, *North Africa: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), Ch. 3.

adopted by the FLN during its first congress in 1964, reveals the intentions of the regime to promote national unity. As one would expect from a document drafted in the immediate aftermath of a victorious war of independence, the nation and its people are depicted without the slightest trace of ambiguity or obscurity. The Algerian people is described as an Arab-Muslim people, with national characteristics and a national territory, and which has benefited from the eradication of minority beliefs and non-Islamic practices (this is a reference to the success of the Islamic reformists in combating superstition in favour of scriptural Islam). As the following series of citations shows, the Algeria of 1964 was depicted as a well-established Islamic state with nationalist values and a homogenous identity, and which recognised the respective positive and negative contributions of Arab expansion and French occupation. On nationhood and shared values:

Le peuple algérien est un peuple arabo-musulman. [...] L'essence arabo-musulmane de la nation algérienne a constitué un rempart solide contre sa destruction par le colonialisme. [...] Malgré ses aspects contradictoires, l'Algérie constituait déjà un Etat différencié. La culture islamique, une hiérarchisation sociale identique, une organisation juridique commune constituaient un lien entre tous les membres de la communauté algérienne.⁵⁶

On nationalism and the need for national unity in the face of minority beliefs:

Le nationalisme, dans les pays colonisés, est la réponse que la population finit par donner à l'oppression coloniale. Il s'oppose au chauvinisme qui est plutôt le propre des pays impérialistes oppresseurs. [...] L'association des Oulémas⁵⁷ a mené un combat acharné pour libérer le peuple des superstitions religieuses et du maraboutisme et a déployé des efforts méritoires pour aider à la renaissance culturelle et à la propagation de l'enseignement de l'arabe. [...] Profondément croyantes, les masses algériennes ont

⁵⁶ *La Charte d'Alger* (Part I, Chapters 1 & 3), available at <http://www.el-mouradia.dz/francais/symbole/textes/charte%20d'alger.htm> [last accessed 11 March 2010].

⁵⁷ Influential association of Islamic scholars founded by Abdelhamid Ben Badis in 1931. Further analysis is provided in Section 2.2.

lutté vigoureusement pour débarrasser l'Islam de toutes les excroissances et superstitions qui l'ont étouffé ou altéré.⁵⁸

On the gift of Arab expansion:

Au VIIe siècle, la rapidité et la profondeur du processus d'islamisation et d'arabisation qui commence ne peut s'expliquer que par le rôle libérateur de cette religion et de cette civilisation nouvelle qu'un peuple aussi combatif n'aurait pas acceptées si elles ne lui apportaient libération, promotion sociale, enrichissement culturel, prospérité et tolérance. Le caractère arabo-musulman demeure ainsi, le fondement de la personnalité algérienne.⁵⁹

And the contrasting barbarity of the French occupation:

L'extermination des populations, le pillage de leurs ressources, la violence inhumaine qui se déchaîne contre la paysannerie algérienne, donnent un coup d'arrêt au développement de l'économie algérienne dans les villes et dans les campagnes, provoquant d'énormes pertes en hommes. [...] Le fonctionnement économique du système colonial et l'implantation d'une minorité européenne créent un véritable goulot d'étranglement à l'évolution du peuple algérien.⁶⁰

Part of the price for unity in the aftermath of independence, then, was the under-representation of the country's diversity (or 'aspects contradictoires') in order to create the illusion of a seamless cultural, linguistic and religious bond. The perception among the new authorities was that Algeria needed to emphasise its existing unity if they were to remain in power. The later criticism of the regime as constructed by the FIS was that its nationalism had strayed from the essence of the November 1954 revolution; the FIS did not denounce the FLN as such, or even reject its legitimacy, but rather tried to breathe new life into this legitimacy by returning to

⁵⁸ *La Charte d'Alger* (Part I, Chapters 1 & 3).

⁵⁹ *Ibid* (Part I, Chapter 1).

⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

something more profound than the regime's increasingly desperate attempts to retain unity.⁶¹

Military politics

This legitimacy was above all the preserve of the military, whose reach into the political sphere is enshrined in the country's first two constitutions.⁶² It was only with the new constitution of 1989 that its political role was suppressed, officially at least. However, it took on an even more acutely political role as it became clear that the rise of the Islamists represented a threat to the status quo of the military bureaucracy.⁶³ The strength of this structure in the aftermath of independence can be explained by the pre-existing military bureaucracy under colonial occupation. Hamza Alavi offers an analysis of postcolonial state structures that deliberately contrasts with classical Marxist explanations of the division of power.⁶⁴ He points out that class structures are significantly different in a postcolonial state, as there is more than one dominant class (he cites the indigenous bourgeoisie, the metropolitan bourgeoisie and the landed classes). While Marxist theory posits that the state is

⁶¹ That there was common ground between the FIS and the FLN is a claim made by nearly all of the analysts I have studied in the preparation of this thesis. More specific analysis of the ways in which this manifested itself is provided in Chapter III, Section 1.3.

⁶² The preamble and Article 8 of the 1963 constitution state that the *Armée nationale populaire* (ANP) participates in the political activities of Algeria, as part of the framework of the FLN; Article 82 of the 1976 constitution states that the army contributes to the 'development' of the country and to the 'edification of socialism'. Both documents are available at www.conseil-constitutionnel.dz [last accessed 12 March 2010].

⁶³ For example, the intervention in June 1991 to suppress demonstrations by the FIS is largely believed to have been a military decision (see Chapter III, Section 3.1 for further analysis). Similarly, evidence suggests that the coup in January 1992 was not agreed between the administration and the military generals, but was imposed by, among others, General Khaled Nezzar (see Chapter IV, Section 1.1).

⁶⁴ Hamza Alavi, 'The State in Postcolonial Societies: Pakistan and Bangladesh', in K. Gough and H. P. Sharma (eds), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1973), pp. 145–73. Note: although written about the cases of Pakistan and Bangladesh, Alavi stresses that his analysis can be applied generally to postcolonial societies: 'The argument is stated in terms of an account of recent developments in Pakistan and Bangladesh. While there are, necessarily, some particular features that are specific to that context, the essential features of the situation which invite a fresh analysis are by no means unique. The focus of the analysis is on the special role of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy which has become all too common a phenomenon in postcolonial societies' (p. 145).

created by the ascendant bourgeoisie as an instrument for its dominion over the working classes, Alavi reminds us that the colonial state is created by a foreign bourgeoisie and that when independence is attained, there are competing interests between the indigenous bourgeoisie and the neo-colonialists, who remain a recognisable and influential group in postcolonial society. This in turn changes the relationship between the state apparatus—what he calls the bureaucratic-military oligarchy—and these dominant classes. Marx argued in *The Communist Manifesto* that the state is manipulated by the ruling classes in pursuit of their common interests ('The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie');⁶⁵ however, Alavi suggests that colonial society is 'equipped with a powerful bureaucratic-military apparatus and with governmental mechanisms that enable it, through routine operations, to subordinate the native social classes'.⁶⁶ This apparatus is carried over into the postcolonial society and, with independence, 'those at the top of the hierarchy of the bureaucratic-military apparatus of the state are able to maintain and even extend their dominant power in society, having been freed from direct metropolitan control'.⁶⁷ In other words, colonisation alters the distribution of power to such an extent that the emerging model after independence is recognisable neither in terms of pre-colonial rule nor metropolitan political rule. Alavi's approach explains the continuing strength of the 'bureaucratic-military' force in Algeria today. The country's sole political party until 1988 was the FLN, which was the political wing of the armed forces (ALN – *Armée de libération nationale*) credited with winning the war of independence. Its power was built on the legitimacy it acquired during the liberation struggle, but was

⁶⁵ Cited in J. Elster (ed.), *Karl Marx: A Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 226.

⁶⁶ Alavi, p. 147.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 148.

compounded by its close links with the army and the state structure described by Alavi, i.e., one where the control exercised by the occupier in colonial times was inherited after independence and was then used to continue to dominate even the most elevated of social classes. Again, we see how the colonial legacy marks the structures of the newly independent nation. In this case, it is shown to have impacted on the distribution of power among the country's different social classes, where military power is synonymous with leadership and elitism (all the political leaders of Algeria since independence have had military experience; most were appointed or elected directly from within the armed forces, with the exception of the current President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who nonetheless served under Houari Boumediene's Army of the Exterior during the Algerian War of Independence).⁶⁸

The links between the liberation struggle, with its necessary reliance on military power, and contemporary domestic politics in Algeria are also examined by Luis Martinez.⁶⁹ His central thesis is that participation in conflict is perceived in Algeria to bring with it certain social advantages; it is a marker of prestige, honour, courage and opportunism. So pervasive is this perception, he says, that it can be used to explain the actions of various political entities at different times in the country's history. In the context of the civil war, for example, Martinez explains that the Islamist guerrilla fighters modelled themselves on the successful liberation fighters of the Algerian War: 'Imprégnés du modèle de réussite des moujahidin de la guerre de libération, les guérilleros islamistes croient dans les vertus de la violence comme mode de promotion sociale'.⁷⁰ This is significant as it sets these fighters apart from their political counterparts in the dissolved FIS, which explicitly sought power

⁶⁸ Stone, p. 46.

⁶⁹ Luis Martinez, *La Guerre civile en Algérie : 1990–1998* (Paris: Karthala, 1998).

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 370.

through the electoral process. The violence perpetrated in the name of Islamism during the civil war, therefore, did anything but further this party's political cause. It damaged its credibility as a democratic player and, indeed, damaged the very prospects of democracy in the country as a whole. Martinez is clear that the Islamist fighters in the civil war felt animosity towards the political figures of the FIS because they represented a break from the tradition of conflictual accession to power. This enmity is shared for the same reason by the military regime that cancelled the elections, although, obviously, it was also acting to ensure that a party hostile to the armed forces would not reach power. In a way, therefore, the violence between the guerrilla fighters and the military regime was tainted with an unusual common ground, that of mistrust and resentment of the political figures who so nearly came to power through the ballot box: 'Militaires et maquisards islamistes ont perçu dans l'émergence d'un nouveau personnel politique issu, non plus du maquis mais de la légitimité électorale, une rupture dans le processus de formation des dirigeants'.⁷¹ This notion that the two camps in the civil war were not as adversarial as one might presume is a complex one and will need to be developed further (see Chapter IV).

Implicit in the first of the above two citations by Martinez is the idea that the legitimacy of the country's only political party for nearly three decades, the FLN, can also be attributed to the value of conflict. The FLN's military wing (ALN) succeeded in defeating the French and have benefited from their success ever since, completely monopolising the political scene until 1988 and effectively monopolising it since then. Martinez argues that the authorities in Algeria therefore felt more comfortable in armed conflict than in politicking, which explains the suggestion made by so many commentators (see Chapter IV) that the army fanned the flames of the civil strife in

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 377.

order to garner support in the form of patriotic and nationalist sentiment and erode the solid base the FIS had built up prior to the coup: ‘L’isolement intérieur du régime immédiatement après l’interruption du processus électoral, était en effet complet ; seule la guerre lui a redonné un semblant de légitimité’.⁷² This link between violence and legitimacy is supported by the *Charte d’Alger*, extracts from which we saw above. This historic document reveals a great deal about the aspirations of the liberation movement and the central characteristics of Algerian governance in the early years of independence. In terms of the perceived link between violence and political legitimacy, much is said in the Charter to reinforce this. It is made clear that violent resistance was the only way in which the struggle for independence could ever have been successful:

Dans son unanimité, le peuple algérien avait ressenti que la lutte était placée sur le bon terrain : celui de la critique du système colonial par les armes. Sa détermination de se débarrasser du colonialisme en appuyant fermement la lutte armée, a apporté un démenti cinglant aux dirigeants qui ne croyaient pas dans ses potentialités révolutionnaires, exagéraient la puissance de l’ennemi et mettaient en relief les faiblesses sociales et culturelles de la Nation pour se refuser à affronter les difficultés de la lutte.⁷³

This extract reveals two desires on the part of the FLN: to ensure that the armed struggle (and not a ‘legalistic’⁷⁴ approach) is seen as the key that unlocked Algeria’s independence; and to include the ‘unanimous’ people in this struggle so that they may share in—and therefore be more likely to recognise—this legitimacy. They were largely successful in this regard until Chadli’s presidency in the 1980s, when the relative stability enjoyed under Boumediene gave way to rising prices and rising unemployment, ultimately resulting in the riots of October 1988. Then, as we shall

⁷² Ibid, p. 299.

⁷³ *La Charte d’Alger*, Part I, Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ ‘[S]eule la destruction des organisations politiques legalistes pouvait permettre le regroupement de tous les Algériens désireux de participer effectivement à la lutte armée contre l’opresseur colonialiste’ (ibid, Part I, Chapter 1).

see in Chapter III, the military's use of force seriously undermined its portrayal as protector of the people, and inevitably tarnished the legitimacy of the state as a whole.

In this section we have looked at some of the central ideas behind nation-building and the difficulties it engenders. Smith provides us with a useful framework by which to see nationhood as a construct that is built up over time and suggests ways in which certain groups (such as the intelligentsia) may behave as agents of this process. In contrast to Wallerstein, he rejects an exclusively modern reading of nationalism, in which national sentiment is seen as a political tool, or, in Wallerstein's words, an 'invention of pastness'. I have applied Smith's analysis to Algeria to suggest that the Islamists were able to challenge the state-sanctioned nationalism of the FLN in an effort to replace it with something more befitting the *vertical* ethnicity—Islamic heritage—that, for them, truly defined what it is to be Algerian. The explanation for the FLN's attempts to hold on to power may come from the difficulties encountered by postcolonial governments, whose survival depends on their ability to foster loyalty among their people to a state that was forged out of conflict and instability. Wallerstein shows us that independence carries with it certain political imperatives that must be performed efficiently if a fledgling nation is to survive. Neuberger highlights the difficulties of identity in self-determination among the former colonies and the extent to which the colonial self survived the transition to independence. He also provides a complement to Smith's *ethnies* by suggesting different paths to nationhood and identifying the singularity of the postcolonial situation, where nationalism is seen as an imperative of the modern era, bringing with it the need for a selective historical narrative, as is visible in the extracts from *La Charte d'Alger*. Alavi shows how the institutional framework of a

newly independent nation has specific characteristics that can be traced to its colonial legacy. In the case of Algeria, this legacy explains the strength of the military regime, as well as the adoption of a single-party system after independence. Finally, Martinez, whose work will be referred to again, notably in Chapter IV, reveals some of the complexities in the relationship between violence and politics in Algeria. This relationship requires further analysis in terms of the conflict, and in Chapter IV I will study the way in which violence may have been used to distort the political reality of the Islamist movement. For now, however, my priority is to examine a more theoretical question: the amalgam of religion and politics. In the remainder of this chapter I will consider definitions of fundamentalism and Islamism, showing how the latter represented a clear shift towards political activism. I argue that this shift also reflects the transition outlined in the first half of this chapter, i.e., from a passive sense of innate ('vertical') national identity to an active nationalist voice. This voice was represented by the FLN in its nationalist struggle against colonial occupation, but was later challenged by the FIS, who felt the Islamic nationalism, as embodied by the Islamic reformist movement, that fed into this struggle was subordinated to the FLN's quest for continued legitimacy. Some historical information about Islamic reformism is therefore necessary, as its legacy is crucial to our understanding of the FIS.

Section 2 – Politics and religion

Section 2.1 – Fundamentalisms

Having developed in Section 1 the notion that the FIS made the shift towards a more active form of nationalism, as required in Smith's theory of vertical *ethnies*, this section introduces the idea of another shift: towards a more overtly political

representation of Islamic activism. In the latter half of this section, I will provide historical information about early Islamic reformism in Algeria and how it fed into the later Islamist movement. First, however, I would like to address the broader question of religion and politics. I will do this by questioning the role of secularism today and also by considering how we might define fundamentalism in a way that does not make it the preserve of violent Muslims alone.

Secular fundamentalism?

One might be excused for thinking that in the modern world, religion is in decline. A widespread view, particularly in the West, holds that the modern post-Enlightenment era, with its emphasis on rational thought, profane sources of knowledge and authority, and human-driven progress, is leading us inexorably towards the disappearance of religion—or at least its relegation to a less public role. Religion may be recognised as being a key feature in the governance of society in the past, and considered useful as a means to better understand this past, but, by many, is no longer taken seriously as a legitimate political tool. However, a closer look at governance and popular movements today—in Western and non-Western societies alike—reveals that the world is as ardently religious as it has ever been. Indeed, many commentators have begun to observe, and are contributing to, a reversal of the open rejection of religious influence that has often accompanied intellectual human endeavour since the Enlightenment. This is true of both academic and more mainstream circles. A recent article in the *Guardian*, a traditionally secular and politically liberal publication, is indicative of the reservations that are beginning to surface with regard to the sometimes absolutist—or *fundamentalist*—tenets of atheism. John Gray argues that the secular ‘tide’ is turning and that the renewed

vigour with which some authors⁷⁵ have begun to publish attacks on religion is an uneasy response to this shift: ‘The urgency with which [these authors] produce their anti-religious polemics suggests that a change has occurred [...]: the tide of secularisation has turned’.⁷⁶ What is particularly regrettable about such attacks, according to Gray, is that they have deviated from a position of rational resistance (resistance to the notion of divine agency) to one of insistence that science should and will triumph over religious belief, a shift that Gray qualifies as ‘an article of faith rather than a theory based on evidence’.⁷⁷

Gray’s observation merits further attention. Secularist thought holds that religion should be denied a role in the public arena, and yet its most fervent advocates act with the kind of zeal that is to be found among the faithful. Others have identified this irony, arguing that *fundamentalist* is a term that is just as applicable to the views of some atheists and secularists as it is to the intransigence of Muslim hardliners.⁷⁸ If what we evoke by this label is unerring belief and absolutist values that are used to impose a certain view of the world, then surely it is as valuable in describing the supposed inevitability of religious decline and progress through rational intervention as it is in describing the refusal by certain clerics to engage with other systems of faith. A similar refusal has, after all, been seen on the part of secular authorities in various parts of the world. Turkey, for example, has a long history of closely protecting its secular tradition, with the army acting as the self-professed guardians of Atatürk’s legacy. Three military coups—in 1960, 1971 and 1980—were justified

⁷⁵ See for example: Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2006); Daniel Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (London: Allen Lane, 2006); Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2007); and Michel Onfray, *Traité d’athéologie : physique de la métaphysique* (Paris: Grasset, 2005).

⁷⁶ John Gray, ‘The Atheist Delusion’, the *Guardian*, 15 March 2008.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ See for example the work of John Esposito, Azzam Tamimi or Mustafa Akyol. See also Mohsin Hamid’s Booker prize-nominated *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2007), where he applies the term to the tenets of capitalism in the US.

on the grounds that the unity of the state and its secular tradition were in danger, and when an Islamist Prime Minister (Necmettin Erbakan) came to power in 1996, the military began to exert political pressure until he stepped down, just one year later.⁷⁹ Algeria offers a more nuanced example of secularist intolerance, as it has never really known true secularism, even though, like in Turkey, the armed forces remain largely suspicious of anti-secular practices.⁸⁰ In June 1990, the FIS won massive support (54%)⁸¹ in municipal elections across the country, and the military later began to curtail the powers of local government amidst fears that the Islamist party would damage the democratic institutions of the state.⁸² The following year, the FIS once again won a large percentage (48%)⁸³ of the votes in the first round of parliamentary elections, and this time the military intervened definitively, cancelling the second round of elections, seizing power, banning the successful Islamists from political participation, and effectively triggering the conflict of the 1990s. A critique of this reactionary suppression can be made on at least two grounds. First, it is clear that the military did not act in the wider interests of the people, but rather to protect its own privileged position. Much of the criticism levelled against religious ‘fanatics’

⁷⁹ In relation to military intervention in Turkish politics, Ergun Özbudun identifies two fundamental values that the armed forces feel the need to protect: ‘the indivisible integrity of the Turkish state and the secular character of the republic’. He adds that ‘as long as a threat to these two fundamental values cherished by the military exists, a critical threshold will remain beyond which the military is likely to intervene’ (Ergun Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2000), p. 121. For further details of these coups d’état, see William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview, 2000), pp. 272–7.

⁸⁰ Several factors make this clear. Many of the leading military figures in post-independence Algeria had deserted from the French army during the liberation war and had therefore spent their formative years in a secular and Francophone environment. Furthermore, calls for military intervention prior to the second round of elections in January 1992 came from high-profile secular figures such as Rachid Boudjedra (see reports in *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde* and *Libération* from 03, 04 & 05 January 1992). Also, when the conflict started, a climate that was hostile towards openly Islamic practices developed within the armed forces (see Chapter IV for further analysis). It is clear, therefore, that whatever secularism did exist at an official level within Algeria was largely associated with the military.

⁸¹ Jacques Fontaine, ‘Les élections locales algériennes du 12 juin 1990 : approche statistique et géographique’, *Maghreb-Machrek*, 129 (July–September 1990), pp. 124–40.

⁸² Hugh Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria 1988–2002: Studies in a Broken Polity* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 76; see also reports from *Le Monde* and *Libération*, 25–30 June 1991.

⁸³ Jacques Fontaine, ‘Les élections législatives algériennes : résultats du premier tour’, *Maghreb-Machrek*, 135 (January–March 1992), pp. 155–65.

is that the administration of the state cannot accommodate tactics that operate outside of its rational—and therefore objectively legitimate—structures, designed to protect the people from irrational—and therefore self-interested—behaviour. And yet, these structures are shown to be compromised when the interests of a small elite, with its politico-military concentration of power, are threatened by a broad-based movement that would dilute that power. The second point is that the military intervention in 1992 was made in the name of democracy but actually served to undermine it. Chadli's administration took a step towards democracy by allowing multi-party elections, but the military then took two steps back by cancelling the democratic process when it proved not to work in its favour.

A word of caution is necessary here to distinguish between a critique of 'secular fundamentalism' and one of secularism *per se*. Like most political models, be they based on religious authority, monarchic rule, tribal hierarchy, or universal suffrage, secularism naturally has the capacity to provide fairness and sound governance. To say otherwise would be absurd when one considers the advances made in Europe as the often oppressive influence of Catholicism was curtailed through the separation of church and state. Even Rachid al-Ghannouchi, a leading Islamist scholar from Tunisia, recognises this. Although a severe critic of secularism, he does concede that in the West it 'led to the emancipation of the mind from the authority of religion, and emancipated both religion and society from the authority of the church'.⁸⁴ He even argues that in the absence of Islamic governance, secular rule, with its openness and respect for basic rights, may be the best alternative to the kind of authoritarian rule seen in the Maghreb region since independence:

⁸⁴ Rachid al-Ghannouchi, 'Secularism in the Arab Maghreb', in John L. Esposito and Azzam Tamimi (eds), *Islam and Secularism in the Middle East* (London: Hurst, 2000), pp. 97–123, p. 105.

No matter how critical one may be of secularism, it should not be denied its achievements as a progressive movement. One of the great accomplishments of secularism is the space it provides for pluralism and a reasonable degree of coexistence. Muslims should recognise that the presence of millions of them in the West today, for the first time in such big numbers, is the fruit of several factors including the secularist revolution which liberated the state from the hegemony of the church. [...] Under such a system of governance, it is agreed to respect the fundamental rights of all people without discrimination and without commitment to a religious frame of reference. [...] A democratic secular system of government is less evil than a despotic system of government that claims to be Islamic.⁸⁵

Ghannouchi's reference to regimes that 'claim to be Islamic' serves as a reminder that the Algerian system of government has never in fact been secular. To say that a government 'claims to be Islamic' is to say that it is not really Islamic, but public affiliation with Islam is most definitely not secular either. Political discourse in Algeria has long contained explicit references to Islam, and no truly secular party could hope to succeed in the polls there. I will refer again to the relationship between the state and Islam in Section 2.2, but for now I would like to take a closer look at our understanding of fundamentalism. I wish to address three points in particular: its origins under American Protestantism in the early part of the twentieth century; the recent evolution of the term to refer to events unfolding in the Islamic world (and its parallel limited usage to describe violence in the name of Islam); and finally the term's literal interpretation as belief in the fundamental tenets of a particular doctrine or system.

Fundamentalism and Islamism

While the term *fundamentalist* may be used to describe strict Christian interpretations of the Bible well before the eighteenth century,⁸⁶ fundamentalism as a

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 123.

⁸⁶ See: John McManners, 'Enlightenment: Secular and Christian (1600–1800)', in John McManners (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 267–99, p. 282.

movement *per se* developed in the early part of the twentieth century among Protestants in the United States anxious to distance themselves from the damaging openness of modernist thought and the development of scientific discovery that apparently contradicted the description of the physical world as presented in the Bible. Between 1910 and 1915 a series of popular texts entitled *The Fundamentals* was published in the United States as a counter strand to the developing modernism of the time.⁸⁷ These texts defended and advocated a literal view of the Bible as the word of God, the immaculate conception of Christ, and the Second Coming.⁸⁸ It has been argued, however, that the spirit of these publications was not as ardent as the fundamentalist movement that developed in earnest in the period following the First World War, when the ‘heirs of *The Fundamentals*, which had been rather moderate, turned militant’.⁸⁹ A World Christian Fundamentalist Association was founded in 1919, quickly growing in numbers and increasingly seen to represent an official strand of Protestantism across North America.⁹⁰ It would appear, however, that the influence of the Fundamentalists as a discrete body of Christians began to wane shortly thereafter; this is not to say that the conservative Protestantism they represented was in decline, but that it manifested itself under the auspices of other branches (Evangelicals, Pentecostals).⁹¹

Fundamentalism, then, was well and truly established long before its application to Islam. Early use of the term in English to refer to a strand of the Islamic faith is recorded by the *Oxford English Dictionary* to have begun around the late 1950s,

⁸⁷ Mark. A. Noll, ‘“Christian America” and “Christian Canada”’, in S. Gilley and B. Stanley (eds), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: World Christianities c. 1815–c.1914*, vol. 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 359–80, p. 371.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Martin Marty, ‘North America’, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, pp. 384–419, p. 413.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 419.

when it described supporters of the Khilafat movement that sought protection for the Ottoman Caliphate after World War I.⁹² The term came into common use, however, in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution of 1979, when it was used to describe the doctrine of Ayatollah Khomeini.⁹³ As an extension of this usage, and in particular since the attacks of 11 September 2001 in New York and Pennsylvania, *fundamentalism* (even where not preceded by its modifier 'Islamic') has come to evoke criminal activities carried out in the name of Islam. This is problematic, perhaps first of all because of the term's Christian connotations detailed above. To compare a literal application of the Bible to a literal application of the Koran is entirely misguided, as the two documents are themselves not comparable. As Hugh Roberts points out: 'the Koran is not a collection of histories, but of prescriptions for the social order. To apply the term 'fundamentalism' to radical Islamism is to stigmatise it by means of the connotations of anti-scientific eccentricity appropriate to fundamentalist Christianity'.⁹⁴ This use of the term is also problematic because of the complexity and diversity of fundamentalist behaviour. Consensus on the usefulness or appositeness of this term seems difficult to achieve. Youssef Choueiri considers it a vague term, but nonetheless one that can legitimately be applied to Islamic movements that claim 'to derive political principles from a timeless, divine text'.⁹⁵ As such, Choueiri identifies three movements that can be described as fundamentalist: revivalism, a peripheral movement with its origins in 18th-century Arabia which saw the renewal of Islam 'as an overriding task in the face of prevalent superstitions and religious innovations'; reformism, an urban movement begun in the 19th century by intellectuals who sought to '[reassert] the quest of knowledge and the

⁹² *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Hugh Roberts, 'Radical Islamism and the Dilemma of Algerian Nationalism: The Embattled Arians of Algiers', *Third World Quarterly*, 10/2 (April 1988), pp. 556–89, p. 557.

⁹⁵ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (London: Pinter, 1997), p. xi.

function of consultation in the life of the community'; and radicalism, a latter 20th-century movement which was a response to the development of the secular nation-state and 'highlighted God's sovereignty and the role of jihad as the most important aspects of Islam'.⁹⁶ Choueiri's choice of such divergent movements reminds us of the complex and varying faces of fundamentalism. In contrast to reservations about the use of *fundamentalism* as a catch-all term, Choueiri explains that fundamentalism is eminently Islamic, with its origins in the early intellectual traditions of the Muslim world, and, as long as it is not used to 'postulate continuity of cultural forms or revolutionary movements', does not object to its use in the Islamic context.⁹⁷ One must be careful here, however, not to use *fundamentalism* interchangeably with its Arabic equivalent *usuliyya* (from *usul*, meaning root or basic principle). While the latter is indeed the term used in modern theologico-political discourse as the translation of fundamentalism, its original usage belonged to classical Islam, where it described adherents of the Twelver Shi'a tradition who sought the application of rationalist jurisprudence to the work of *mujtahids* (Islamic scholars competent to interpret divine law).⁹⁸

The manifestations of Islamic fundamentalism are diverse and numerous. There are perpetrators of criminal acts for whom political opposition is inadequate as a means of applying the fundamental tenets of Islam. The Algerian conflict saw the rise of such fundamentalists (for example, in the form of the *Groupes islamiques armés* or the *Mouvement islamique algérien*) once the political path to power had been closed off. And there are those who seek privately to fulfil what they see as the fundamental requirements of their faith, without engaging in public debate or

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. xiv.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. xvi.

⁹⁸ A. J. Newman and J. J. G. Jansen, 'Usuliyya (a.)', in P. Bearman et al. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, online edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2004).

proselytism. But there are also proponents of a political reading of Islam who argue in favour of adherence to fundamental principles contained in the Koran and the Prophet's *Sunna*, and seek to encourage the application of these principles through political representation. These are Islamists, whom I understand to be fundamentalists.⁹⁹ Islamism is a form of fundamentalism. The distinction between Islamists and other non-violent fundamentalists is that they are not content with advocacy of a certain moral outlook; they wish to seek its application through political channels. This reflects the shift I described in the context of Smith's vertical *ethnies* from a quietist sense of belonging to an active expression of nationalism, and was perfectly embodied by the FIS, who built on the Islamic nationalism of their predecessors (figures like Ben Badis and Cheikhs Sahnoun and Soltani, who were not overtly political) and sought to give it political authority. Similarly, their politicisation also reflected the shift away from a more passive expression of fundamentalism. It served, therefore, to 1) reinforce deep-rooted Algerian nationalism (as against the state-sanctioned nationalism *cum* politicking of the FLN) and 2) give an overtly political voice to Islamic fundamentalism. Burgat draws the following distinction: 'la frontière entre le vieux discours fondamentaliste, passif et moralisateur, des clercs de l'islam officiel [...] et le projet islamiste, actif, intégrant explicitement au nombre de ses moyens d'action tous les instruments du champ politique moderne'.¹⁰⁰

If I have identified various expressions of fundamentalism, it is because I wish to emphasise that in itself it is neither illicit nor inherently threatening. While it may be abhorrent to those who believe in the value of liberal reappraisals of knowledge and

⁹⁹ This is in line with the reading offered by Olivier Roy and François Burgat; see Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé*, new edition (Paris: Seuil, 2002), Ch. 6 and Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, pp. 28–33.

¹⁰⁰ Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, pp. 30–31.

principles, it is not as dark and rare as is often suggested; indeed it is representative of a position held by many people in relation to many things. To claim a hold on the truth is, after all, nothing unusual. Indeed, many opponents of fundamentalism could themselves be said to claim to represent the truth. In *A Fundamental Fear* Salman Sayyid makes this point, arguing that it is not only fundamentalists who purport to represent the truth, but also Nazis, communists, socialists, conservatives and ‘even the parliamentarians of the North Atlantic plutocracies’.¹⁰¹ This being so, Sayyid suggests that *fundamentalism* is not useful as a term: if we extend its application to the political (as well as the religious), then it is clearly difficult for many to escape the label, as ‘the difference between non-fundamentalists and fundamentalists collapses’.¹⁰² However, perhaps it is this very openness that would be useful in breaking down some of the assumptions made about fundamentalism. If perceptions of the fundamentalist position could include those who operate outside of Islam (indeed, outside of religion) and outside of violence, then perhaps popular notions of a binary world (divided into those who support terrorism—and are therefore ‘fundamentalists’—and those who do not) would break down as the term *fundamentalism* took on a more literal meaning—the strict adherence to *any* set of basic ideas or principles. Sayyid himself points out that the ‘articulation of an “international community” in opposition to (Islamist) terrorism replays the colonial discourse of a world order that is organised in terms of the opposition between civilisation and barbarism’, thereby tainting any challenge to state authority with a lack of legitimacy.¹⁰³ And he bemoans with the demise of communism the concurrent loss of a politically educational ‘narrative’ that depicted violence as

¹⁰¹ Salman Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London: Zed, 2003), p. 13.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. xi.

something that could be ‘structural and systemic rather than just the act of an “evil” or “mad” individual’.¹⁰⁴ Surely a more inclusive use of the term *fundamentalism* could serve public perceptions in the same way: what is needed is a clear understanding that fundamentalist values can be represented by the religious *and* the political, by conservatives *and* liberals, by insurgents *and* the authorities, by public activists *and* private believers. I will take a similar approach to my understanding of democracy in Chapter II, where I argue against excessively restrictive definitions, which act as barriers to entry for emerging political forces such as the FIS.

Section 2.2 – Religion in politics

Islam and the Muslim state

The acceptance of open definitions is at the heart of my analysis of the admixture of religion and politics, for it represents a vision of the two that does not mutually exclude but rather considers them as always and everywhere having been bound together. Let us consider, then, the extent to which Islam is part of politics. This requires a look at the ways in which the state, Muslim officials and the people have traditionally interacted in the Muslim world. It should be stressed at this stage that important differences exist between the political structures of the Shi’a and Sunni branches of Islam, in terms of official outlets for representatives of Islam. Sunni Islam is more relevant to this thesis (99% of the Algerian population is Sunni),¹⁰⁵ but it is useful to understand that Shi’ism provides for the existence of independent clerical bodies as an extension of the *usuli* movement in 18th-century Iran, which advocated a greater role for *mujtahids*, the most influential of whom would go on to become *ayatollahs*. This structure accounts for the eminently political role of

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. xii.

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ag.html> [last accessed 10 May 2010].

religious representatives in Iran, but while the success of the Iranian revolution in 1979 can be said to have impacted upon the Algerian Islamist movement, the structural differences between these two branches of Islam ensure that any perceived causal links must be treated with caution.¹⁰⁶

Leon C. Brown provides a broad look back at the ways in which interaction between the state, religious representatives and the people in the Muslim world has evolved since pre-modern times. He suggests that traditionally there was little chance of an institutional clash between state and Islamic officials (in Sunni Islam), as no organisational structure existed by which imams or the *ulama* could mount an official challenge.¹⁰⁷ He makes it clear this does not mean that no challenges came from clerics, but rather that such challenges were expressed on a more local level; in other words, the Muslim clerics did not have the means to operate as a unified whole (in contrast to the Catholic Church and its opposition to the state in medieval Europe). As for the state and its position in relation to clerics, Brown identifies a similar climate of circumspection, saying that the Muslim state might traditionally have avoided confrontation with them for two reasons: public perception of state hostility to preachers or the *ulama* might result in popular discontent; and because the clerics lacked the institutional structure to pose a challenge in the first place, the state had no reason to fear undue influence from them.¹⁰⁸ Brown's structural analysis is doubtless accurate, but perhaps another explicative factor is the historic closeness of the religious and political positions in the Muslim world. Put simply, if the views of those behind the state apparatuses are only moderately divergent from those representing Islam, then the risk of massive conflict (as arose during the

¹⁰⁶ Stone, p. 156.

¹⁰⁷ Leon C. Brown, *Religion and State: The Muslim Approach to Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 34.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 33.

secularisation of Europe) is low, particularly if these more or less convergent views are also held by large swathes of the population.

What, then, of *popular* perceptions of and participation in the political sphere? Brown argues that Muslims traditionally regarded politics as something best kept at arm's length, with a particular divide between rural dwellers and the business of government. In what he refers to as 'premodern bureaucratic empire' (citing examples such as the Ottoman, Moghul or Safavid Empires), state and society were kept very much distinct and can be understood as a typical centre-periphery structure.¹⁰⁹ This all changed in modern times, as European occupation forced a shift towards the politics of the nation-state and parallel 'state penetration into society'. While this shift cannot be seen as the pivotal moment in Muslim history (Brown is at pains to point out that significant change was evident before, during and after the colonial period), the colonial confrontation between Europe and Islam was nonetheless the most important political reality of the time. Brown sketches two approaches among the Muslim populations to this reality: 'those prepared to adjust to the world as it is versus those insisting on making the world adjust to their image of what the world should be'.¹¹⁰ The former—the 'establishment' or 'Westernising' approach—was initially the domain of the political elite, whose defeat at the hands of the colonial forces meant that the political imperative was 'defensive modernisation'. The efforts of these educated classes to come to terms with the new dynamic of society under Western occupation proved strained, and Muslim intellectuals soon began to study the processes behind European success, and there emerged a movement that has come to be referred to as Islamic reformism (or Islamic modernism). Perhaps the two figures most often cited as the fathers of Islamic

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 70.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 91.

reformism are Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905), both of whom preached a vision of Islam as a religion of civilisation that needed to adapt to the changing power structures of the time.¹¹¹ In his early years Abduh was a student of al-Afghani's and as such adhered to his anti-imperialist discourse, a position that resulted in his exile from Egypt when he contributed to the Urabi Revolt of 1881.¹¹² While in exile it is said that his position moderated and he was allowed to return in 1888. Brown therefore sees Abduh as an accommodationist or 'establishment' thinker, while al-Afghani's views were more openly 'anti-establishment'.¹¹³ Regardless of this distinction, both are remembered for their insistence that Islam was not incompatible with reason or science and was in need of regeneration in order to face the challenge of Western domination.¹¹⁴ The ideas of these two thinkers were first influential in more eastern parts of the Muslim world (Abduh was Egyptian while al-Afghani was born in Iran and spent his formative years in Afghanistan), before later being taken up by reformers in the Maghreb region.¹¹⁵ Abduh's visit to Algeria in September 1903 is said to have been pivotal in the rise of Islamic reformism there.¹¹⁶ It is essential to understand the import of this movement in terms of Algerian nationalism and the later development of Islamism under the FIS.

Reformism, nationalism and Islamism in Algeria

In our understanding of the Algerian nation we cannot underestimate the status of reformist Cheikh Abdelhamid Ben Badis (1889–1940), the father of Islamic

¹¹¹ Anke von Kügelgen, 'Abduh, Muhammad', in G. Krämer et al. (eds), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, online edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Brown, *Religion and State*, pp. 95 and 107.

¹¹⁴ 'Abduh, Muhammad', in John Bowker (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of World Religions*, online edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁵ Leon C. Brown, 'The Islamic Reformist Movement in North Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2/1 (March 1964), pp. 55–63, p. 58.

¹¹⁶ Roberts, 'Radical Islamism and the Dilemma of Algerian Nationalism', p. 560.

reformism in Algeria: '[le réformisme musulman algérien] était fortement concentré autour d'un homme, 'Abd al-Hamīd b. Bādīs, qui en était la tête pensante et le centre moteur. De cet homme, et presque exclusivement de lui, il tenait son essence doctrinale et sa puissance de rayonnement'.¹¹⁷ It was he who on 5 May 1931 founded the influential *Association des 'Ulama musulmans algériens* (AUMA),¹¹⁸ a group which sought to establish 'the supremacy of a modernist, scripturalist, puritanical, and tacitly nationalist Islam at the expense of the old-time religion of the saints'.¹¹⁹ That the reformers were nationalistic makes sense in the context of their formal beginnings, as the French administration had just celebrated one hundred years of colonial rule in Algeria (1830–1930), and several indigenous groups already existed who had expressed their disappointment at these celebrations.¹²⁰ Indeed, there was ongoing opposition to the administration's handling of religious matters. Franck Frégosi tells us that broken promises to respect the autonomy of religious expression, made by the colonial forces as early as 1830, had angered religious dignitaries from the outset, and that this anger continued to be manifested until it was taken up by the association of Ben Badis in the 1920s.¹²¹ This is significant because although the AUMA was founded as a 'strictly religious party'¹²² its apoliticism was clearly undermined by the attacks it made on the colonial administration:

La plupart des manifestations religieuses ou culturelles des réformistes avaient une résonance algérianisante, du fait qu'elles étaient placées sous le signe de l'Islam, de la

¹¹⁷ Ali Merad, *Le Réformisme musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940 : essai d'histoire religieuse et sociale* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1967), p. 9.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 119.

¹¹⁹ Hugh Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 433. Note: while Roberts identifies only *tacit* nationalism, Merad describes Badissian propaganda as 'explicitly' nationalist (p. 85).

¹²⁰ Merad, p. 122.

¹²¹ Franck Frégosi, 'Islam et Etat en Algérie : du gallicanisme au fondamentalisme d'Etat', *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée*, 65 (1992), pp. 61–76, p. 62.

¹²² Ben Badis referred to the future AUMA in these terms in an appeal to the 'literate' members of Algerian society favourable to the tenets of reformism, which were published in the third edition of his pamphlet *al-Šihāb* (Merad, p. 120).

culture arabe, qu'elles invoquaient l'histoire pré-française de la patrie algérienne, et qu'elles excluaient toute référence à l'histoire, à la culture et à la présence françaises. L'idéal religieux des réformistes ne se limitait pas à la réformation des pratiques religieuses, à la propagation de la foi, à la diffusion d'une éthique islamique. Il impliquait la restauration de la dignité islamique, et la revendication d'une personnalité algérienne arabo-musulmane, inassimilable à la personnalité française.¹²³

Islamic reformism, therefore, was central to early Algerian nationalism, but it also had an influence on the later nationalist agenda of the revolution and the post-independence identity of the Algerian nation. And the role the AUMA played in the later formation of an Islamist opposition can be understood by the closeness between it and the state in the post-independence era. Having first formed a close alliance with the PPA (*Parti du peuple algérien*), the party of Algeria's great nationalist, Messali Hadj, the association later aligned itself with the breakaway group that formed the FLN and as such ensured itself continued representation in the governance of Algeria.¹²⁴ The cross-over between religious expression and nationalism was thereby sealed, a development which came as no surprise: 'Cet emprunt, cette connexion entre valeurs religieuses et aspirations nationales ne pouvait surprendre dans un pays de tradition musulmane où face à la politique de nivellement de la communauté autochtone au plan culturel et religieux, l'islam apparaissait comme une valeur refuge, un substitut de la nationalité'.¹²⁵ However, although the *ulama* had successfully established reformist Islam as the official religion of state, and had laid the spiritual foundations for the revolution of 1954, this did not ensure they enjoyed independence from the executive: 'the fledgling nation-state nationalized Islam much as it had nationalized the press and the oil industry,

¹²³ Ibid, p. 147.

¹²⁴ Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 433.

¹²⁵ Frégosi, p. 63. For more information on the role of Islam in Algerian nationalism, see Jean-Claude Vatin, 'Religion et Etat : puissance d'Etat et résistances islamiques en Algérie, XIX-XXe siècles, approche mécanique', in *Islam et politique au Maghreb (Table ronde du CRESM, Aix-en-Provence, juin 1979)* (Paris: CNRS, 1981), pp. 243–69 (especially Section 5, pp. 257–62).

and thereby subordinated the Islam of the reformers to the nationalist *raison d'état*'.¹²⁶ Frégosi makes this same point, adding that the subordination of Islam to state control was an extension of colonial tactics. He tells us that while the French had never been able to secularise Algeria as such, they had maintained tight control over religious expression through 'gallicanist' policies, and once the revolutionaries of 1954–1962 had successfully invoked Islam in their battle, they propagated this tradition into the post-independence era: 'Après avoir durant toute la durée du conflit (1954–1962) sacralisé le combat pour la libération nationale – érigé au rang de *djihad* et le combattant transformé en combattant de la foi (*moudjahid*) – il ne restait plus, une fois l'indépendance acquise, qu'à nationaliser le sacré'.¹²⁷ While the close alliance between the reformers and the FLN continued, the fact that religion was used to serve political ends angered a minority of religious thinkers, including those who would go on to form the basis for Algerian Islamism, such as Abdellatif Soltani (1900–84) and Ahmed Sahnoun (1909–2003). It is worth explaining in brief the kind of influence these men had on the Algerian Islamist movement as a whole and how the emergence of the FIS must be understood in relation to their legacy.

Cheikh Soltani was a leading figure in Ben Badis' AUMA and later a key dissident who challenged the policies and dominance of the FLN state. He published a controversial text in 1974 entitled *Le mazdaqisme est la source du socialisme*.¹²⁸ Banned from print in Algeria, this diatribe criticised the Boumediene regime's Marxist tendencies and further rejected the importation of Western mores, drawing a parallel between the 'impious' Algerian state and the libertine, communist values of

¹²⁶ Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 433.

¹²⁷ Frégosi, p. 65.

¹²⁸ For further discussion of the impact of this text, see: Ahmed Rouadjia, *Les Frères et la mosquée : enquête sur le mouvement islamiste en Algérie* (Paris: Karthala, 1990), pp. 157–8; and Bargout, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, p. 145.

Mazdak, the leader of a Persian sect in the fifth century B.C. It was an attack that was representative of the anger felt by dissident *ulama* in Algeria:

[Dans ce livre] Soltani résume le mieux les préoccupations, les inquiétudes et les déceptions des hommes de sa génération qui avaient cru, jusqu'à l'indépendance, à l'avènement d'une société débarrassée des mœurs néfastes – mixité, alcool, licence, etc. – introduites dans le pays par la colonisation'.¹²⁹

Soltani was arrested for his 'opinions' in 1981, but on his release the next year continued to challenge the regime's lack of moral rigour.¹³⁰ Significantly, he later collaborated with a young Abassi Madani (and Sahnoun) on a petition presented to the government in the aftermath of a clash between leftist and Islamist students, for which Abassi served two years in prison.¹³¹ The Cheikh's funeral in 1984 was attended by some twenty-five thousand mourners, despite no official announcement being made, and is popularly cited as an indication that the Islamist movement was gathering pace.¹³²

While Soltani was a key figure of the reformist movement in Algeria, his death in 1984 meant that he missed the dramatic events of 1988 and the subsequent electoral successes of the FIS. Of the two men, it was Ahmed Sahnoun who had the potential to shape the Algerian Islamism of post-1988; his decision not to join the FIS, however, was crucial in determining the party's future and is indicative of the step towards greater politicisation favoured by the party's founding members. In keeping with the tradition of Islamic reformism, Sahnoun, a preacher, was wary of an overly political application of Islam, although his actions over the years placed him very

¹²⁹ Rouadjia, pp. 157–8.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Hugh Roberts offers a conflicting view on this, arguing in 1994 that the large attendance was *despite* a slow-down in the movement as a whole ('From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 446), but later pointing to the funeral attendance as a sign of the 'movement's continuing vitality' (*The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 22).

much in a position of dissidence with regard to the regime. He had, for example, participated in the same petition that led to Abassi's arrest in 1982, and gave regular sermons at a private (and therefore independent of state control) mosque in Constantine between 1973 and 1980.¹³³ His politicised attitude to the state has led Ahmed Rouadjia to place him *between* the traditional body of reformist ulama and the political Islamists who marked the 1990s.¹³⁴ As such, Sahnoun would have been following on from the work of Ben Badis, who in turn had used the intellectual contributions of early reformist thinkers like al-Afghani and Abduh to have a greater impact on society and politics: 'on constate [avec Ben Badis] une évolution réelle de la pensée réformiste avec, très clairement, ses premiers ancrages dans l'action sociale et politique'.¹³⁵ However, Sahnoun ultimately opted for the primacy of religion over politics when he refused to join the FIS in 1989. In the wake of the October riots in 1988, President Chadli felt it was necessary to meet with key Islamist figures, if only because there were no other spokespersons for the rioters, who were mostly young and not affiliated to any movement as such.¹³⁶ And so it was that Abassi, Belhadj and Mahfoud Nahnah (1942–2003)¹³⁷ met with the President, and were thereby 'consacrés leaders du mouvement islamiste'.¹³⁸ The impetus this gave the movement

¹³³ Rouadjia, p. 156. Note also that Sahnoun was approached by General Khaled Nezzar to serve on the *Haut comité d'Etat* (HCE) in the aftermath of the January 1992 coup, but refused (Michael Willis, *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History* (Reading: Ithaca, 1996), p. 251).

¹³⁴ Rouadjia, p. 155.

¹³⁵ Tariq Ramadan, *Aux Sources du renouveau musulman : d'al-Afghānī à Hassan al-Bannā, un siècle de réformisme islamique* (Lyon: Tawhid, 2002), p. 24.

¹³⁶ The relationship between President Chadli and the emerging Islamist movement, and in particular his motives for making apparent concessions to it, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter III, Section 2.

¹³⁷ Nahnah founded the Islamist party HAMAS in December 1990. Now known as the *Mouvement de la société de la paix* (MSP), this is currently the leading Islamist party in Algeria, with 51 seats in the National Assembly, compared to 136 for the FLN and 62 for the RND: http://www.apn-dz.org/legislature_6/french/parti_fr.php [last accessed 04 December 2009]. For more information on Nahnah and the MSP, see Lahouari Addi, 'Les partis politiques en Algérie', *Revue de l'Occident Musulman et de la Méditerranée* (CNRS: Aix-en-Provence, 2005), pp. 1–20, p. 11. Further information is also provided in Appendix 1.

¹³⁸ M. al-Ahnaf, B. Botiveau and F. Frégosi, *L'Algérie par ses islamistes* (Paris: Karthala, 1991), p. 29.

led to the establishment of various organisations, including that of Cheikh Sahnoun, *Rabitat al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya* (League of the Islamic Call), which brought many of the leading Algerian Islamists together and included Abassi, Belhadj and Nahnah. However, al-Ahnaf et al. suggest that this 'apolitical' league never had the potential to harness the energy of the Islamist movement as it existed post-'88:

Il était clair alors que cette organisation, qui se présentait comme apolitique et essentiellement conçue pour la défense et l'illustration d'un islam à l'algérienne et en vue d'affirmer l'unité de la mouvance islamiste, ne pouvait être le cadre idoine d'une agitation politique et d'une activité multiforme en vue d'instaurer un Etat islamique en Algérie.¹³⁹

It was of course the FIS that harnessed this energy, thereby making that crucial step away from a form of fundamentalism which, while clearly political in its outlook, eschewed any involvement in the state structures *per se*. In Chapter III, I will provide further details of the FIS' development, showing how the party ultimately evolved towards a specifically Algerian political outlook, while respecting a legal and constitutional approach to electoral politics. What I hope to have shown in this chapter is that two significant shifts were made by the Algerian Islamists. First, they challenged the self-serving statist nationalism of the FLN regime in an effort to emphasise the deeper roots of Algerian identity, i.e., its Islamic heritage. This, I have argued, reflects the transition identified by Smith, who says that vertical *ethnies* require the kind of impetus I suggest was provided by the FIS in order to move towards more active expressions of nationalism in the modern era. Secondly, they built on the ambivalent legacy of Islamic reformism, which was political in nature but never overtly so, in an effort to apply Islamic principles directly to governance via electoral participation. That the FIS built on earlier legacies

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 30. For further analysis of Sahnoun's decision not to join the FIS, see Chapter III, Section 1.1.

(nationalism and reformism) is evidence that it did not represent the rupture that so many feared.

Reconciling public practice and private belief

I would like to conclude this chapter with some general remarks about religion in the public and political spheres, in order to emphasise the popular reality of public faith in the modern world. This ties in with the approach I adopt in Chapter II, which argues in favour of an open assessment of democracy that would better accommodate the realities of many non-Western societies, where religion is often an unquestioned element of public life. John Esposito has remarked that Western development theory in recent centuries has equated secularism with progress and religion with backwardness.¹⁴⁰ This has led to a common perception among the intellectual elite that fundamentalist belief in a system of faith is a minority phenomenon and one that is to be feared, when in actual fact it is and always has been the most common of spiritual models. For most people in the world, to be a believer is to subscribe to the fundamental tenets of one's faith; globally it is only in more select circles that belief has come to mean something more personal and relativistic. The world is as fiercely religious now as it ever has been. Indeed, it is the more conservative and dogmatic schools that are thriving, while those religious institutions that have adapted to or compromised with secularism—Catholicism in Western Europe and Protestantism in the US, for example—are in decline.

One feature of the modern era is the speed with which change is accepted, even expected. The absence of any spiritual references in public life, for example, has become the norm for people living in most Western democracies. Many are surprised looking back at a time when man could have been so naive as to have afforded such

¹⁴⁰ Esposito, *Islam and Secularism*, p.11.

an abstract notion as morality a place in positive law or governmental discourse. And yet the exclusion from public governance of direct reference to such faith-bound concepts is a relatively recent development. This is what is so surprising about the dominance of secularist thought: not that it has succeeded in gaining so much ground—for one can see its strengths as a viable political model—but that in such a short time span, and for so many people, it has become so unequivocally the only possible model one could perceive as progressive and modern. And this despite millennia of non-secular rule and openly religious influence on public life.

This dominant force in Western politics is responsible not only for the erosion of religious influence in public life, but also for our failure to come to terms with the force of political Islam and, more generally, the growth of popular religious movements worldwide. So unequivocal has the secular mindset become for most lawmakers, political analysts, journalists and other influential figures in public communication in the West that any other political view is often perceived as somehow backward. This goes a long way to explaining the disbelief with which many in the West view the rise of the Islamist movement globally. It can be hard to comprehend how an ideology that, to them, seems so inherently ‘unmodern’ can gain any ground at all. And so it is that general misconceptions develop, such as the view that this movement is necessarily the domain of an ‘extremist’ minority, or that its proponents must be ‘targeting’ the disenfranchised and ill-educated in order to swell their numbers. It is inconceivable to many that large numbers of well-educated people elsewhere in the world could subscribe to an ideology that would allow unscientific and unobjective principles play a role in the governance of their society. Secularism has itself become akin to a dogma, whereby any political model with religious undertones is perceived as a threat to democracy and progress. It is against

such presumptions that so many Muslims have reacted with anger—all the more so in Algeria, where it was the people's own representatives who propagated these same presumptions by shutting the door on political Islam.

Esposito highlights the irony in the secularist view of religion as a private matter that should in no way reflect any more than personal experience.¹⁴¹ To see religion as a compartmentalised system of belief is to ignore the role played by human history in the evolution of faith, much like a conservative cleric who insists on the independence of religious truth from human intervention. Of course, in reality belief systems develop as part of the interplay between public and private life. No religious movement can be detached from the political, social, economic and cultural context in which it is born. The texts, principles and rules of a given system of faith are developed in accordance with what is understood to be just and instructive at a particular time and in a particular place. This is not to say that religious doctrine does not extend beyond the short-term needs and values of a given society—it does introduce ideas that are generally noble, meaningful and lasting—but the role played in its development by men and women such as scholars and preachers makes its application bound by context. This is true whether or not one chooses to believe in the unworldly authority of a deity, as all belief systems depend to a greater or lesser extent on the contributions made by worldly humans. To see faith as an exclusively private matter is to ignore the roles played by believers and non-believers alike in constantly shaping our perception of what it stands for. These roles are played out in a more or less 'public' sphere: one's conception of faith may be influenced by, for example, a group conversation in a private setting, graffiti in a public place, or an article in a widely-read newspaper. This explicit interplay between the public and

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 12.

private spheres, although not formalised in positive law or public policy documents, indelibly marks our political model in as much as it marks those who contribute to the design and implementation of that model. In other words, even in the West, the insistence that faith can only be private ignores the evidence that it cannot but be public at times. Secularism, when applied fundamentally, runs the risk of being dogmatic in its insistence that religiosity in society is anti-modern, and illusory in its belief that governance is possible without due influence from a long history of faith and society mutually shaping one another.

Chapter II: Islamism and Challenges to the Democratic Paradigm

*While the West criticizes Islamic
governments for not being
democratic, it also supports
governments who are not democratic
and are keeping Islamic movements
from developing their ideas – Rachid
al-Ghannouchi¹*

This chapter is about challenging restricted interpretations of modernity and political Islam. The central ideas of this thesis are based on the conviction that Islam can inform the political structures of majority Muslim nations where there is a mandate for Islamic political parties to hold office. And that this need not threaten the values on which modernity is thought to be built. In our assessment of modernity, it is of course necessary to hold an ongoing debate about what constitutes fairness in society, democratic principles in governance, freedom in human interaction and so on. This means challenging any new political models that might be seen to undermine the *acquis* of modern times, such as the protection of individual liberties or the alternation of power in government, but it is equally important in this debate to avoid any intellectual posturing that would be reminiscent of the hegemony of Western—and especially imperial—political and intellectual contributions. In the context of Islamism this is especially sensitive, as the influence of religion in the political order is anathema to the modernist view that viable politics is essentially secular. I would wish to challenge any definition of modernity that depends on such a view: this thesis is underpinned by the view that the modern world is porous and complex, and as such no longer corresponds to dominant (mostly Western) notions of

¹ Cited in John L. Esposito and James P. Piscatori, 'Democratization and Islam', *Middle East Journal*, 45/3 (summer 1991), pp. 427–40, p. 438.

modernity. In terms of politics, the dominant paradigm of modernity is one that privileges the rights of the individual over those of the community and refuses the politicisation (and even public nature) of religious belief, two issues I will be addressing in more detail in this chapter. As such, it better accommodates the Western political order. Yet the pluralist nature of society today means that homogenous definitions of democracy and modernism are no longer adequate.² One of my aims in this chapter is to challenge two differing approaches to the Islamist question, particularly as observed in the work of three French-language political scientists:³ the first—and most common—approach is to operate a kind of *barrier to entry* ultimately denying Islamism admission into the modern political paradigm (Lahouari Addi and Olivier Roy); the second is to under-emphasise the influence of Islam in Islamist thought in order better to convince (presumably Western) readers that parties like the FIS *should* be admitted into this paradigm (François Burgat).

Section 1 – Democratic theorising

One of the key questions in the analysis of events in 1990s Algeria—particularly, it would seem, analysis done by Western observers—is the extent to which the FIS was in fact a *democratic* party. What some call the interruption of the electoral process, others refer to as an assault on democracy. But to what extent can we speak in terms of *democracy* when assessing the events of Algeria in January 1992? Can a party like the FIS be admitted into the democratic paradigm? Or is it necessarily excluded by virtue of certain perceived incompatibilities between its discourse and

² For an account of how modernity is being reshaped in the context of the world's major religions, see Robert W. Hefner, 'Multiple Modernities: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism in a Globalizing Age', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 27 (1998), pp. 83–104.

³ I refer here to Lahouari Addi, Olivier Roy and François Burgat. Addi, it should be said, is in fact Algerian-born, but now works in France.

the universal tenets of democracy? Later, in Chapter III, I will look at the specific actions of the FIS in order to provide some perspective to help answer these questions. In Chapter II, however, I will examine the question of our theoretical approach to democracy as experienced outside of the Western political tradition. I will first draw on Western political theory in the hope of showing that at least some elements of political Islam are not as unfamiliar or unpalatable as is often thought, before going on to examine the work of Addi, Roy and Burgat, challenging the restrictive interpretations each offers in different ways. This chapter will serve as a theoretical complement to Chapters III and IV. Section 1 (challenging orthodox, Western definitions of democracy) supports my portrayal of the FIS in Chapter III as a dynamic, new political force, and Section 3 (on sovereignty, Islamism and legitimacy) further complements the view that the FIS respected procedure (including popular sovereignty) and was politically legitimate. Section 2 (in particular Addi and Roy's refusal to recognise Islamist democracy) reflects the tactic adopted by the Algerian regime during the civil conflict, when the essence of the Islamist opposition was distorted in order to portray it as demonic and irrational.

I would like to begin by looking at some theoretical approaches to democracy where Islam is not a direct concern. I will pay particular attention to those elements of democratic theory that find resonance in political Islam, but which do not address it explicitly. First, however, it is important to emphasise the changeable nature of democracy, a model that has been subject to differing interpretations for many centuries. I cannot offer a complete history of democracy, of course, but would like to highlight some of its different manifestations.

Section 1.1 – Democracy: some history and problems of definition

Broadly speaking, democracy has evolved from a system of direct rule by the people, in ancient Greece, to the more familiar and now common form of representative government adopted by most democratic states worldwide. When steps were first taken, more than two and a half thousand years ago, to hold regular meetings at which citizens could participate in a public decision-making process, we must assume there was no intention to ‘implement a coherently thought-out general conception of the political and social good’; this development was, rather, ‘a severely local response to protracted local difficulties’.⁴ Nor was it an open and equitable system that gave all citizens the right to participate; indeed, ‘the barriers to the acquisition of citizenship by outsiders were raised higher as the history of classical Athens went on’.⁵ The same was true of ancient Rome, where not even a majority of the city’s inhabitants were part of the ‘citizen class’.⁶ This elitism was directly challenged in some of the Italian city-states during the 12th and 13th centuries, when councils that were nominated and effectively ruled by the nobility (*podestà*) saw the emergence of competing councils (*societates*).⁷ Although such developments can be seen as democratic in that they represented a challenge to the notion that governance was a God-given right enjoyed by certain members of society, Skinner reminds us that these city-republics were never considered to be democracies.⁸ At what point, then, did democracy emerge? The 17th and 18th centuries saw the rise of constitutional government in places like Britain, France, North America,

⁴ John Dunn (ed.), *Democracy the Unfinished Journey: 508 BC to AD 1993* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. v.

⁵ Simon Hornblower, ‘Creation and Development of Democratic Institutions in Ancient Greece’, in Dunn (ed.), p. 3.

⁶ Bernard Crick, *Democracy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 34.

⁷ Quentin Skinner, ‘The Italian City-Republics’ in Dunn (ed.), p. 58.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 59.

Scandinavia, Russia and the Iberian Peninsula.⁹ This was after widespread challenges to closed systems of privilege such as feudalism, monarchy and aristocracy, but it might be argued that this still did not constitute democracy, as universal suffrage had yet to appear.¹⁰ However, perhaps the necessary momentum had been built up. Jean Baechler, in his study of democracy, argues that following the French Revolution the peasantry had no difficulty in making collective decisions and playing a role in municipal life, and that the working classes of the early 20th century needed little encouragement to forge a role for themselves in democratic governance, as political society already displayed both pluralist and democratic leanings:

Il a suffi de moins d'une génération, pour que les premiers signes de cette aptitude [ouvrière à constituer des centres autonomes de décision efficaces] apparussent [...] Ces succès et ces victoires auraient été impossibles et moins rapides, si [...] le régime politique et social n'avait pas été déjà polycentrique en fait et démocratique par inclination.¹¹

It should be clear that we cannot with any assurance consider democracy to have emerged at a given point in history; its evolution was not linear or steady, but circumstantial and irregular. And this continues to be the case today, with ongoing debate about how we should measure democratic systems.¹² The history of democracy has seen innumerable interpretations that have shaped and reshaped our understanding of the democratic paradigm. And this paradigm continues to evolve, as the preponderance of discourse on Islam and democracy shows. Indeed, it should be remembered that democracy has only recently come to be accepted in most Western societies: 'Widespread acceptance of democracy as a legitimate basis for political order is a phenomenon of the modern era. It tends to be forgotten that as late as the

⁹ For a historical account, see Donald W. Treadgold, *Freedom: A History* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), Ch. 7.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 227.

¹¹ Jean Baechler, *Démocraties* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1985), p. 533.

¹² See David Beetham (ed.), *Defining and Measuring Democracy* (London: Sage, 1994).

end of the eighteenth century, most Western political thinking was based on principles other than democracy'.¹³ Its history, therefore, reveals not an atavistic model but one which has depended on circumstance. It follows that our assessment of democracy in the context of Algerian politics must account for Algerian circumstance and Algerian viewpoints. As two commentators put it: 'our understanding of democratization will not be facilitated if we ignore the way democracy is interpreted in the culture in question'.¹⁴

In terms of definitions, the task of defining democracy is clearly one of interpretation. Indeed, it is itself a highly political act. One approach to be avoided is to rely on specific existing models in order to deduce the essence of democracy, for if we assume it is something that is applied—and not innate—then it follows that no one system should act as a benchmark.¹⁵ Alternatively we can seek to identify minimum 'requirements', but here too there is room for debate: for example, the basic notion that citizens have a role to play in the exercise of power already requires us to determine what we mean by 'citizens' and 'exercise of power'. Anthony Birch has argued that we cannot employ the terms required to define democracy in a 'value-free way'.¹⁶ When referring to 'rule by the people', he says, our values (and perhaps our gender) will determine whether we mean women to be necessarily included in this category. And, though few would argue against such inclusion today, what of those democracies that only accorded women the right to vote in recent times? Was pre-1950s France undemocratic? And, Birch asks, would apartheid South

¹³ John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, 'Islam's Democratic Essence', *Middle East Quarterly*, 3/1 (September 1994), pp. 3–11, p. 3. David Held makes the same remark in his *Models of Democracy*, third edition (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), p. 1.

¹⁴ Nikolai Biryukov and Victor Sergeev, 'The Idea of Democracy in the West and in the East', in Beetham (ed.), p. 182.

¹⁵ See Michael Saward, 'Democratic Theory and Indices of Democratization', in Beetham (ed.), p. 6.

¹⁶ Anthony H. Birch, *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy*, second edition (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 73. See also: Held, pp. 1–2.

Africa have been more democratic (or less undemocratic) if the ruling whites had been a sizeable majority rather than a minority? Similarly, the term ‘rule’ is problematic. Just how much influence must the electorate have in order to participate in democratic rule? Is it sufficient to cast one’s vote, or must there be greater involvement in the decision-making processes that are binding on the population?¹⁷ One might argue that the gap between electoral participation and policy-making is growing, as increasing population levels mean that a smaller percentage of civil society can serve as public representatives. This might go some way towards explaining the apparent rise in voter apathy in what might be considered some of the world’s most successful democracies.¹⁸

Section 1.2 – Communitarian-liberal debate

If I highlight the difficulty of defining democracy, it is because I wish to argue that there is no objective or infallible criteria for excluding political Islam from the democratic paradigm. Indeed, some of the same values advocated by theorists of democracy are harnessed by political Islam. I would like to take an example from within democratic theory to show that, independent of any concerns related to Islam, a debate *already* exists—one which, like the Islamist discourse, challenges values such as libertinism, individualism, universalism and materialism without calling into question the democratic tradition as such. I thereby hope to show that to admit into the democratic paradigm those elements of political Islam that argue for less emphasis on, for example, material gain or the individual pursuit of happiness, and greater emphasis on family values or a sense of community, would not necessarily

¹⁷ Birch, p. 74.

¹⁸ To take just two recent examples: the regional elections in France held in March 2010 saw voter participation levels at a record low (*Le Monde*, 14 March 2010); and the scandal over MPs’ expenses in the United Kingdom is widely seen to have damaged public perception of the body politic (Prime Minister Gordon Brown expressed concerns over levels of ‘public trust’ in his apology for the scandal; see reports from the *Telegraph*, the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail* from the 11 May 2009).

disrupt the democratic model. This is partly because, as I have argued, there is no static model in the first place, but also because democratic theorists in the West have been debating similar issues for some time. I am referring here to the communitarian-liberal debate, which one commentator has referred to as the ‘central debate in Anglo-American political theory during the 1980s’.¹⁹ I would go further, and suggest that this debate continues to be crucial to ongoing efforts to create a just society worldwide. The reader may wish to examine developments in the field of human rights law, where the historical emphasis on individual rights is being complemented by consideration of cases where the legal protection of group rights might be required.²⁰ As such, this is a recognition that the focus on individual rights is not sufficient to eliminate gross inequalities that affect identifiable groups within society. While this is not exactly the same argument as I present here in relation to political Islam, there is one key connection: it is the realisation that organising the world as though composed of individuals who can lead fulfilling and equitable lives as long as their individual rights are respected may not be the most effective model.

To understand the context of the communitarian-liberal debate in political theory, we must look back at a key moment in the development of modern liberalism. When John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice* in 1971,²¹ he made a number of significant contributions to political thought: he effectively supplanted the utilitarian view of liberalism that ‘the greatest good’ should be sought for ‘the greatest number’, on the

¹⁹ Susan Moller Okin, ‘Humanist Liberalism’, in Nancy Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 46.

²⁰ See for example: P. Jones, ‘Human Rights, Group Rights and People’s Rights’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 21/1 (1999), pp. 80–97; M. Scheinin, ‘How to Resolve Conflicts between Individual and Collective Rights?’, in M. Scheinin and R. Toivanen (eds), *Rethinking Non-Discrimination and Minority Rights* (Turku: Institute for Human Rights and Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2004), pp. 219–238; G. Gilbert, ‘Individuals, Collectivities and Rights’, in N. Ghanea and A. Xanthaki (eds), *Minorities, Peoples and Self-Determination* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2005), pp. 135–61; T. Hadden, ‘The Pendulum Theory of Individual, Communal and Minority Rights’, *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 77 (2000), pp. 77–90.

²¹ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

basis that this required morally reprehensible choices to be made and because ‘a rational man would not accept a basic structure merely because it maximized the algebraic sum of advantages irrespective of its permanent effects on his own basic rights and interests’;²² he introduced a rights-based view of distributive justice that asserted the need to defend those with undeserved disadvantages;²³ and he built on Kant’s moral and political teachings by replacing, in the words of Michael Sandel, ‘Germanic obscurities with a domesticated metaphysic more congenial to the Anglo-American temper’.²⁴ Sandel is referring here to the work of Kant on justice and morality, suggesting that Rawls’ writings would have been more easily digestible for Anglophone readers. Indeed, *A Theory of Justice*, although philosophical in nature, offers concepts that are easily applicable in substantive ways. Perhaps the central contribution of this work is Rawls’ notion of the ‘original position’, a hypothetical standpoint from which man would choose the principles by which to govern society, from behind a ‘veil of ignorance’, i.e. prior to any knowledge of his personal interests or allegiances and with no specific views of what constitutes good in society. Rawls therefore imagines a human subject capable of judgement that is detached from its specific environment. He argues that such a subject, not knowing whether it is endowed with natural advantages or not, would tend to be risk-averse in its conception of how society should be governed, because it might find itself among the less well-off. Rights and the protection of the disadvantaged are therefore paramount from the perspective of the original position, which has led liberal

²² Ibid, p. 13. See also: Daniel Bell, *Communitarianism and its Critics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 2.

²³ Shlomo Avineri and Avner De-Shalit have suggested this element of Rawls’ work was indirectly responsible for introducing the issue of the welfare state into political theory; see S. Avineri and A. De-Shalit (eds), *Communitarianism and Individualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 1.

²⁴ Michael Sandel, ‘The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self’, in Avineri and De-Shalit (eds), p. 18.

political theory to advocate the *primacy of rights*, something that is at the core of the communitarian-liberal debate.

The liberal tradition insists on the rational-thinking subject who enjoys freedom of choice, and correspondingly argues against any authoritative assertion of what is good for society: as individual free-thinkers, the argument goes, we decide what is best for us and the state's role is to protect our basic rights, not guide us towards a particular way of life. This implies that the assertion of rights should not be based on a specific conception of the good in life, but rather should be universal and based on something like the abstract subject in Rawls' original position. This assertion of the primacy of rights has led to the suggestion that 'the right is prior to the good',²⁵ reflecting the liberal position that universal justice should take pre-eminence over particularistic claims as to what is just. Jürgen Habermas has addressed this issue in the context of the communitarian-liberal debate, arguing for a sort of compromise between communitarianism and what he calls proceduralist politics, i.e., where inviolable procedures cannot be modified by specific interests. He suggests that no legal norms should be constructed without concern both for universal principles of justice and the competing interests in any given society that must be accommodated as part of the common good.²⁶ Ultimately, however, he rejects the establishment of any 'ethical convictions' on which justice would depend, saying that justice cannot be related 'to a specific collective and its form of life'.²⁷ In other words, we can and must discard our own *private* contexts in order to reach objective conclusions about *public* justice.

²⁵ For a discussion of this view, and challenges to it, see Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 185–95.

²⁶ Jürgen Habermas, 'Three Normative Models of Democracy', in Ronald J. Terchek and Thomas C. Conte (eds), *Theories of Democracy: A Reader* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 236–43.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 239.

This, it would seem, cuts to the core of modern democracy: our private and public selves are kept separate. And Rawls must take this as a given when he advocates principles of justice that exclude private conceptions of the good. But is it not too great an assumption to expect people to disentangle the moral judgements they make in their private lives from the principles to which they subscribe in public governance? Can we reasonably expect people to live a dualistic life as citizens, on the one hand, and as moral persons on the other? This may be less problematic in established Western democracies, where people have come to accept, particularly in relation to their personal faith, that the public and private spheres are distinct. I tried to challenge this view in my closing remarks to Chapter I, arguing that there is always a certain amount of interplay between the two spheres, whether explicit or not. But even if we accept that the public and private have been successfully set apart in many modern democracies, it is clear that in a society such as Algeria a distinction between public citizen and private Muslim will be much harder to achieve. We are approaching, here, the crux of the problem in assessing the relationship between Islam and democracy: it is a question of *barriers to entry* into the democratic paradigm. By insisting on a pre-requisite to democracy, such as that the state cannot take into account the common moral position of its citizens in determining principles of justice, we do not encourage its growth but render it more exclusive, which in turn serves as a reminder of recent domination on the terrain of political ideology.

Later in this chapter, we will look at some of the analysis to come from French-language political scientists in relation to Islamism and the democratic question. I hope to show how this restricted view of the democratic model, with its pre-requisites taken from the Western experience of democracy, operates the kind of barrier to entry to which I refer. For now, however, let us continue to focus on the

main point of contention between communitarians and liberals, which hinges on this view of our capacity for detached assessment of who we are and what we want, with the former arguing that it is artificial to suggest there can be any such detachment from certain *constitutive* elements of our being. So where the liberal will argue that, for example, a Catholic is free to act in accordance or discordance with the qualities or viewpoints one might associate with the Catholic way of life, the communitarian will suggest this is not only impossible but ontologically undesirable, as to detach oneself from something as formative as one's religious background would be to live a shallow and empty—let alone artificial—existence.²⁸ It should be noted that religion is not singled out as being any more or less constitutive an element than, say, family or ethnicity; the communitarian argument is simply that our social relationships inescapably shape our understanding of the world around us and of ourselves. This, then, would appear to be a *philosophical* debate, one that offers differing conceptions of the self. Communitarians object to the liberal notion of an abstract subject capable of free choice that is independent of the social influences we are exposed to in life: the liberal self is abstract and individualistic; the communitarian self is context-bound and inter-subjective. However, the locus of this debate is political theory and as such it is also a debate with *normative* application. It is this dimension of the debate that interests us most: communitarians challenge the liberal model of democracy, arguing that it can be changed in practical ways to reflect the realities of an inter-subjective society. The fact that their argument is not delivered in a religious context does not make their approach any more valid than

²⁸ Bell suggests that those who endeavour to 'escape from the grip' of their constitutive communities will find their lives 'deprived of sense' in what he calls 'damaged human personhood' (*Communitarianism and its Critics*, p. 100); for a similar view, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 26–7. For a critique of such views, see N. K. Badhwar, 'Moral Agency, Commitment, and Impartiality', in E. F. Paul, F. D. Miller Jr. and J. Paul (eds), *The Communitarian Challenge to Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1–26.

that of an Islamist who is also willing to challenge and engage with the democratic model.

What then are the normative objections raised by communitarians about the liberal, individualist perception of how society functions? Broadly speaking, and following on from their criticism of the overly individualistic emphasis of liberal thought, they regret the ‘atomistic’ shape that modern society has adopted, with its emphasis on liberal politics designed to provide individuals with the means to pursue their own autonomous goals. The implication of such politics is that the state must not advocate certain values over others: it is the prerogative of individuals to choose those that correspond to their personal goals. Daniel Bell describes the liberal conception of neutrality as ‘a system of mutual advantage requiring only that (a) people be willing to coexist with ways of life different than their own and (b) the government doesn’t justify its policies by appealing to the presumed superiority of any particular conception of the good life’.²⁹ Bell later critiques the requirement that such neutrality prioritise ‘neutrally justifiable principles of justice’, arguing that without a certain amount of recognition by a government that its principles are committed to the specific community that it governs, one basic tenet of governance has been disregarded, i.e. ‘that the government ought to concern itself first and foremost with meeting the needs and interests of the community over which it governs’.³⁰ That this is indeed a basic tenet of governance is made clear when one considers the amount of time in election campaigns generally dedicated to the national economy or domestic crime, when compared to foreign policy.

²⁹ Bell, *Communitarianism and its Critics*, p. 57. Note: this work is written as a dialogue between two advocates of the communitarian and liberal viewpoints; this view is therefore expressed by the liberal protagonist.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 79 (n. 3).

For Charles Taylor, atomistic society and state neutrality can lead to diminished political participation and a corresponding decline in the standards of political governance. In *The Malaise of Modernity*, he depicts modern society as one that has shed its respect for the ‘old orders’ and is too reliant on instrumental reason. This means that people make decisions based on economy and personal advantage, and disregard the ‘moral horizons’ that once structured society and provided indications of our role in relation to others: ‘Once society no longer has a sacred structure, once social arrangements and modes of action are no longer grounded in the order of things or the will of God, they are in a sense up for grabs’.³¹ In political terms, Taylor’s view is that as long as a government can continue to provide the people with ‘the means to the satisfactions of private life’, then they will worry less about participating in the public sphere, the state can establish tighter bureaucracy, and, in his words, ‘the vicious cycle of soft despotism is joined’.³² Taylor borrows the term ‘soft despotism’ (*despotisme doux*) from Alexis De Tocqueville, who described how the tyranny and despotism of old would in time be replaced by a sort of tutelage, designed to keep citizens in a child-like state—concerned only with their personal pleasures and therefore politically docile:

[S]i le despotisme venait à s’établir chez les nations démocratiques de nos jours [...] il serait plus étendu et plus doux [...] Au dessus [des citoyens] s’élève un pouvoir immense et tutélaire, qui se charge seul d’assurer leur jouissance et de veiller sur leur sort. Il est absolu, détaillé, régulier, prévoyant et doux. [...] il ne cherche [...] qu’à les fixer irrévocablement dans l’enfance; il aime que les citoyens se réjouissent, pourvu qu’ils ne songent qu’à se réjouir. [...] C’est ainsi que tous les jours il rend moins utile et plus rare l’emploi du libre arbitre ; qu’il renferme l’action de la volonté dans un plus petit espace, et dérobe peu à peu chaque citoyen jusqu’à l’usage de lui-même.³³

³¹ Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Concord: Anansi, 1991), p. 5.

³² Ibid, p. 9 and p. 10 respectively.

³³ Alexis De Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique : les grands thèmes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), pp. 346–8.

Taylor defends the use of De Tocqueville's analysis even in the context of modern Western democracies. Despite the possibility for 'protest, free initiative, and irreverent challenges to authority' that he says these democracies offer, Taylor suggests they are nonetheless guilty of producing citizens who are 'increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and carrying it out', a decline he ascribes to the fragmentation, or atomisation, of modern society.³⁴

Robert Bellah, in his defence of democratic communitarianism, does not go quite as far in his critique of the modern state, but he does find fault in the modern-day emphasis on impetus that is external to the citizen.³⁵ His belief is that our 'ontological individualism' leads us to see opportunity as the solution to all our problems; in other words, if each citizen can find the means necessary for the pursuit of his own goals, then there is no need for substantive agreement or cohesive governance. The external impetus for these individual opportunities comes, he says, from one of two sources—the market or the state. Bellah uses this assessment to show how the political world is not as divided as one may think: if most of the world's democracies use either the free market or the welfare state as 'the most effective provider of those opportunities that will allow individuals to have a fair chance at making something of themselves', then it follows that there is not much of a gap between conservatives or liberals, Republicans or Democrats, capitalists or socialists, who advocate one over the other.³⁶ Both 'sides' agree that the solution is individualistic.

³⁴ Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, p. 112.

³⁵ Robert Bellah, 'Community Properly Understood: A Defense of "Democratic Communitarianism"', in Terchek and Conte (eds), pp. 83–7.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 84.

Daniel Bell also emphasises how both the political left and right can be criticised in normative terms for their excessively individualist application of policy.³⁷ Left-wing governments, for example, may be guilty of ‘shifting power away from local communities and democratic institutions and towards centralized bureaucratic structures better equipped to administer the fair and equal distribution of benefits, thus leading to a growing sense of powerlessness and alienation from the political process’.³⁸ Furthermore, he points out that a society built on universal rights and entitlements, such as under the welfare state, can isolate people and render superfluous their interaction with the communities to which they belong. It is also clear, he says, that the political right, with its preference for free-market capitalism, can undermine the family (where inadequate parental leave is granted in the private sector, for example) and disrupt local communities (as happened following the mass dismissals during the Thatcher government).

Different theorists offer variations on the central theme of communitarianism—the artificiality and danger of governing society as though composed of discrete individuals willing to cooperate only to the extent that their own purposes are served. Alisdair MacIntyre, for example, insists that modern ‘systematic’ politics places too much weight on institutional arrangements and not enough on moral consensus, thus making the traditional expression of virtues in society impossible.³⁹ Michael Walzer emphasises the need for political thought to reflect the traditions of the particular society in which it is formed, thereby allowing us to share the ‘world of meanings’ that develop over time as part of those traditions.⁴⁰ Some theorists emphasise the

³⁷ See Section 3 of his essay, ‘Communitarianism’, available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/communitarianism/> [last accessed 12 May 2010].

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Alisdair MacIntyre, ‘Justice as a Virtue: Changing Conceptions’, in Avineri and De-Shalit (eds), pp. 51–64.

⁴⁰ See Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

importance of certain communities over others, drawing distinctions between those that involve voluntary association and those to which one is inextricably linked.⁴¹ The common thread in communitarian discourse, however, is concern about the development of a modern society in which the essence of community belonging is diminished, and in which governance relates more to individual liberty than moral solidarity. The result, it is argued, is that individuals are losing a sense of who they are and governments are eschewing the search for consensus.

Section 2 – Assessing Islamism: some perspectives from metropolitan France

My aim is not necessarily to take sides in the communitarian-liberal debate, but rather to highlight the similarities between the points raised by communitarians and the concerns voiced by Islamists. There are of course many different Islamist viewpoints, and I do not wish to speak of a homogenous whole. However it is safe to say that the Islamist movement, with its emphasis on Islamic morality, advocates in all cases a greater place in society for consensus and unity under God. And it decries the impact that modernisation, and Westernisation in particular, has had upon Islamic morality. For it is the evolution of the modern political order that has had a particular impact on the capacity for such morality to be ever-present in public life. With greater emphasis now placed on the individual, the fraternity that marks Islamic

⁴¹ Chandran Kukathas, for example, cites three main types of community: those that require common origin, such as kinship, habitat or blood ties; those that emphasise commonality of interests, i.e. consensus-based communities; and those he refers to as partial communities, where a single shared interest is sufficient. Kukathas himself argues that there is too much emphasis on the political community, both among liberals, who tend towards centralised institutional power, and among communitarians, who fail to recognise the many non-political, partial communities to which most individuals belong. See: C. Kukathas, 'Liberalism, Communitarianism, and Political Community', in Paul et al. (eds), pp. 80–104.

society gives way to a different common bond: citizenship.⁴² One analyst of Algerian politics has sketched the difficulty for many Algerians of making the transition to a fully modern conception of public space and human interaction within communities. Lahouari Addi is an Algerian-born political scientist whose academic career has taken him from sociological and economic analysis (his early publications focused on banking and agricultural structures in colonial Algeria)⁴³ to a more direct assessment of contemporary Algerian politics and the Islamist question in particular. We will return a little later in this chapter to his ideological assertions with regard to democracy, sovereignty and Islam, when I will show how his apparent openness to non-Western specificity is ultimately subordinated to his insistence on certain universal principles of democracy as experienced in Europe, and even more specifically in France. Now, however, I would like to focus on his comments with regard to community and Islam and the challenges that have accompanied modernity in Algeria.

Section 2.1 – Lahouari Addi

The traditional Algerian society depicted by Addi is one in which informal control in many segments of the population is maintained by unofficial community structures. He argues that the single-party regime under the FLN failed to provide public links between citizens outside of the family or community units, meaning that a public sphere in which individuals could interact independently of these units was never created. The historic strength of these units means that the individual who is free of attachments, as described in the liberal political tradition examined above, is

⁴² For an analysis of this shift, see Ghalioun, pp. 56–8.

⁴³ See for example: Lahouari Addi, 'Produire ?', *Les temps modernes* (July–August 1982), pp. 132–51; 'Rareté, rente et plus-value', *Les temps modernes* (March 1983), pp. 1715–40; 'Logique de rente et production jointe', *Revue économique*, 38/5 (September 1987), pp. 1043–7; (sous la direction de Michel Camau) *Néo-patrimonialisme et économie en Algérie* (Paris: CNRS, 1991).

regarded with mistrust and is left in a precarious position. This became a major problem in Algerian society, Addi suggests, as more and more people began to migrate to urban areas in the wake of independence. The effect of such migration was to create neighbourhoods in which anonymity now reigned, a phenomenon that left many ill at ease as it eroded the efficiency of the ‘contrôle social informel’ that was possible in tight communities:

[L]’anonymat dans la ville, favorable à l’agressivité et à la délinquance, faisait regretter l’efficacité de la pression du village sur l’individu [...] En effet, les habitants du quartier, ne connaissant pas sa parentèle, se sentent désarmés face à un individu susceptible de mal se comporter sans « faire rougir de honte » les siens.⁴⁴

The suggestion here is that individualism was feared by some on the basis of morality; there was a worry that without accountability and free from the pressures exerted by the family and/or community, individuals would no longer benefit from the moral checks and balances that would otherwise keep them from subverting community norms. This, Addi suggests, is what explains the strength of the growing Islamist movement in urban areas: its proponents sought to combat ‘le désordre urbain et la licence’, thereby compensating for the loss of informal control brought about by the massive population changes of the post-independence period.⁴⁵ Identifying the state’s failure to provide formal social structures outside of the family, the FIS sought to consolidate social harmony via religion. This implied group participation in the safeguard of religious ethics, and therefore less pressure on the state to provide the kind of public sphere associated with secular Europe, presumably a political tactic on the part of the FIS to distance the FLN regime from the provision

⁴⁴ Lahouari Addi, *Les Mutations de la société algérienne : famille et lien social dans l’Algérie contemporaine* (Paris: La Découverte, 1999), pp. 21–2.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

of public order in the mindset of the population.⁴⁶ Indeed, this was a tactic that the FIS employed in other ways: its offer of various forms of ‘public’ assistance prior to the municipal and parliamentary elections of 1990/91 served to cement the perception that it was already a key player in the community, providing the kind of services one would ordinarily associate with the state (family planning, financial advice, aid in the aftermath of the 1989 earthquake).⁴⁷ Martin Stone has suggested that the key strength of the FIS was as a ‘corrective’ movement, compensating for the lacunae in public services with the help of financing from wealthy donors in Saudi Arabia, as well as domestic investment from ‘merchants’.⁴⁸ This spirit of *entr’aide* was a key component of the FIS’ success: by highlighting what could be achieved independently of the state, the party emphasised the value of community support—in a context of Islamic morality—in the face of individual adversity.

The thrust of Addi’s *Les mutations de la société algérienne* is his attempt to identify the contradictions in contemporary Algerian society. He argues that there is a desire in Algeria for a departure from the pre-eminence of the family structure in favour of a freer and more individualist form of association, but that individuals continue to propagate the ‘*habitus* communautaire’ as a result of the state’s failure to build a modern society.⁴⁹ What is interesting is the rigidity of his definition of such a society. Writing in *Le Monde diplomatique*, he challenges the capacity of Algerian society for development, asking whether it is ready ‘à se concevoir comme une

⁴⁶ Interestingly, Addi explains that the Algerian state was accustomed to such a hands-off approach, as it had benefited from a ‘contrat tacite’ with the family unit during the 1970s, when many of its responsibilities, such as the provision of housing or care for the elderly and infirm, were alleviated by families in return for free healthcare and subsidies on certain foodstuffs. This contract became untenable in the 1980s, however, when oil prices slumped, hampering the state’s capacity for redistribution, and the housing shortage worsened.

⁴⁷ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, note 3, p. 79. See Chapter III, Section 2.2 for further analysis of this tactic.

⁴⁸ Stone, p. 166; see also Luis Martinez, ‘Guerre civile et œuvres pies en Algérie’, *Critique internationale*, 4 (summer 1999), pp. 127–37.

⁴⁹ Addi, *Les Mutations*, p. 9.

collection artificielle d'individus libres, et non plus comme un ensemble organique doté d'une âme collective, à l'intérieur duquel l'existence de l'individu n'a de sens que par rapport au destin du groupe'.⁵⁰ Elsewhere, he argues that modernity is 'built on the depoliticization of religion'.⁵¹ Significantly, he says such depoliticisation is not really possible in the context of Islam, which does not have recognised spokespersons in the way that, say, the Catholic Church does, and can therefore be represented (politically or apolitically) by any Muslim believer. However, he rejects the Islamist 'utopia' of combined spirituality and profanity, saying that what is needed is a careful re-working of political modernism to fit the 'mold of Arab-Islamic culture'.⁵² This is possible, he says, but must not come from the streets, as in the case of the FIS. While it is positive that Addi acknowledges the capacity of political modernism to be revised or 're-worked', it is clear that he refuses to accept the arrival of political forces like the FIS, which he identifies not as a political party, but as a 'sentiment', a 'pre-political culture'.⁵³ I will show in Chapter III that the FIS in fact behaved in an eminently political fashion. What disconcerts Addi is perhaps that the FIS' popularity belies his assertion that most Algerians seek a more individualist society, free from the '*habitus* communautaire'. Ultimately, the party's electoral successes undermine his rigid understanding of modernity, which he repeatedly asserts is fundamentally about creating a public sphere in which legal norms (*Etat de droit*) can be constructed; he describes this space as 'le lieu de naissance de la société globale composée d'individus libres des attaches

⁵⁰ Lahouari Addi, 'Réformes politiques et crise culturelle : de la démocratie en Algérie', *Le Monde diplomatique* (October 1989).

⁵¹ Lahouari Addi, 'Islamicist Utopia and Democracy', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 524 (November 1992), pp. 120–30, p. 124.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 126.

⁵³ *Ibid*, p. 128.

communautaires et des solidarités familiales et consanguines'.⁵⁴ He clearly has a vision of modernity, therefore, that subscribes to the liberal tradition described earlier, in which we are free to shed the 'attachments' and 'solidarities' of our environment. He even seems to laud the development of the kind of material and legalistic foundation bemoaned by the communitarians, arguing that while modernity inevitably entails the loss of some authentic and indigenous features of society, it compensates for such a loss by providing individuals with 'rapports marchands balisés par des règles politico-juridiques'.⁵⁵ And this model of modernity, he argues, is fundamentally incompatible with the group-oriented societal structures envisioned by the Islamists, who would endeavour to preserve community values in cities populated by millions.

It is interesting to view Addi's analysis in the light of Smith's description of lateral and vertical *ethnies*, explored in Chapter I. We saw how Smith warned against exclusively modernist assessments of the nation, challenging any definition that did not take account of the historical ethnic traditions that form a nation's identity. One problem we might identify with Addi's analysis is not so much that he fails to recognise these traditions in the case of Algeria, but rather that he sees them as a hindrance to the country's 'modern' development. I argued in Chapter I that it is useful to see Algeria as representing elements of both of Smith's *ethnies*: while the 'lateral' structures of occupied Algeria are evident in the layered society that colonial domination implies, and these structures could even be said to have persisted somewhat after independence with the dominance of a secular, Francophone elite, there are clearer signs that Algeria is above all a nation typical of Smith's vertical *ethnie* (one in which organised religion is the vehicle for traditions and social bonds).

⁵⁴ Addi, *Les Mutations*, p. 24.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 124.

Smith explains that in such cases the transition to modernity tends to blend the ethnic traditions of the past with the imperatives of the modern nation. Addi, on the other hand, by arguing that it is misguided to seek to preserve communitywide morality, effectively rejects the mobilisation of a shared heritage as incompatible with the necessarily rigid definition of modern society. This is an example of the kind of *barrier to entry* to the democratic paradigm that I have suggested is being operated against emerging democratic forces like the FIS: Addi seems to view society as a modern phenomenon that is to be defined in opposition to traditional structures; this in turn means that any political thought that values such structures (and any voters willing to support such thinkers) is automatically excluded from the ‘modern’ political process, i.e., the construction of a modern society made up of individuals no longer ‘restrained’ by their family/community ties and who find support from the state in the form of an ‘Etat de droit’, ‘rapports marchands’ and ‘règles politico-juridiques’.

Section 2.2 – Olivier Roy

Addi is not the only analyst to identify an uneasy relationship between Islamism and the inescapable features of modernity. Olivier Roy, perhaps best known for his thesis that political Islam has failed,⁵⁶ identifies certain factors that have shown the essence of Islamism to be misguided. One such factor is the spread, or ‘banalisation’, of openly Islamic modes of expression. In a process he calls ‘réislamisation’, Roy explains how the original impetus of the Islamist movement—its insistence on the fusion between the religious and the political—has been lost as a form of secular space has developed with the increasing re-islamicisation of Muslim societies worldwide. What he means by this seemingly paradoxical assertion is that

⁵⁶ Olivier Roy, *L’Echec de l’islam politique* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

widespread expressions of the Islamic faith in public spaces allow religion to operate outside of the political sphere (albeit in the public sphere), and therefore outside of the aegis of the Islamists; in other words there is a separation between the religious and the political, something he says that Islamists expressly combated as they sought a monopoly on both. This, Roy says, reinforces the assertion that the religious and the political can never be one, and that all Islamist claims to offer a *complete* mode of social being were destined to be proven false: '[la réislamisation] se fait en dehors de l'ordre politique, réduit alors à sa logique propre, ce qui souligne l'impossibilité de « totalisation » sociale propre à l'islamisme'.⁵⁷

This certainly seems to be an original argument: Roy has effectively reinterpreted the notion of secularism, broadening its scope from the rigid and typically French *laïcité*, which sometimes even appears hostile to religion, and applying it to the growth of Islamic practices that are distinct from any politico-religious objectives. The problem with this viewpoint, however, is Roy's assumption that the Islamist movement claims some kind of monopoly over religious expression: if the non-political manifestation of one's Islamic faith can be seen as a challenge to the success of Islamism, as Roy argues, then it follows that Islamists desire such faith to be expressed within the framework of their political authority.⁵⁸ It is more likely, in my view, that the rise of Islamist politics reflects what its partisans believe to be an inherent characteristic of the people—an Islamic culture that transcends politics. Here we can identify some tension in Roy's analysis: he himself emphasises that in their desire to create an Islamic state, many 'neofundamentalist' movements, including the FIS, encourage its development to come from the people ('par le bas'),

⁵⁷ Olivier Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé*, new edition (Paris: Seuil, 2002), p. 49.

⁵⁸ For a similar view, see Bernard Rougier, 'L'Islamisme face au retour de l'islam?', *Vingtième siècle : Revue d'histoire*, 82 (April–June 2004), pp. 103–18.

and not be imposed from on high.⁵⁹ This implies that the objective of such groups is to harness and encourage the spiritual sincerity of the masses and give it state recognition; it is to formalise something that is already effectively in place. Indeed, Roy goes so far as to say that in Islamist thought the role of institutions has always been diminished, as emphasis is placed on the virtue of the people who make up an Islamic society rather than the organs responsible for its governance. In such a society, he says, there would be great value placed on communal virtue rather than state-sanctioned civic modes of being: ‘les relations sociales seraient l’expression des vertus individuelles et n’auraient pas besoin d’être médiatisées par des institutions’.⁶⁰ But this is the basis for Roy’s assertion that Islamist ideology is destined to run up against an *impasse*: ‘Le modèle politique islamiste ne pouvant en fait être réalisé que dans l’homme et non dans les institutions, cela suffit à rendre impossible une *polis*, une « cité » islamiste’.⁶¹

At least two objections can be made to this line of argument. First, it is unclear just why a diminished role for political institutions implies the redundancy of Islamist thought. It is only because Roy’s understanding of a modern ‘polis’ requires strong institutions rather than community-centred governance that he can draw a conclusion about the impossibility of the Islamist ideology. Essentially, he would only admit parties like the FIS into the political sphere if their objectives and methods were more closely aligned with his restricted interpretation of successful political power. He consistently argues that Islamism has failed because it never managed to redraw the geopolitical boundaries of the Muslim world,⁶² but this seems

⁵⁹ Roy, *L’Echec*, p. 39.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 88.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 87.

⁶² As well as *L’Echec de l’islam politique* and *L’Islam mondialisé*, see also Olivier Roy, ‘Radical Islam’s Failure’, *Foreign Affairs*, 74/1 (January–February 1995), p. 187.

like an excessive pre-requisite for a political movement not to be written off. Salwa Ismail has suggested that the success of the Islamist movement reaches beyond state and government alone, highlighting the wider impact it has had by redefining some of the political stakes in the modern Muslim world:

Some Islamists have rendered the defense of morality a continual test of the state's legitimacy. Others have rivaled the state in providing social services, mobilizing local communities' resources and responding to vital needs. In all this, Islamists are both conscious strategists and beneficiaries of deeper social change. Islamist politics, understood in this way, has proven its adaptability and resiliency.⁶³

Secondly, Roy's conclusion implies that if an Islamist government were to embrace the modern nation-state structure, this would signify a failure on their part to implement their political vision. Once again, this all-or-nothing approach only serves to make the political sphere exclusive and rigid. Of course we will see failure if we adopt a literal interpretation of Islamist rhetoric that appears to reject modern political processes, but we should focus more on actions than words. When judging the success or failure, practicability or artificiality, of political Islam, what exactly is it that we would expect in real terms were an Islamist party to reach power? And prior to the electoral process, surely we should consider it more important for parties to respect legal procedure than to produce literature and speeches that are easily digestible in terms of the status quo. There can be no doubt that parties like the FIS intend to destabilise the body politic, so it is no surprise that their discourse emphasises massive change. But can we really judge their success on the basis of the margin between what they claim and what they do? Burgat, who as we will see is a consistent advocate of the need to accommodate the emerging political challenge from the Islamist camp, argues that too many observers have taken a literal approach

⁶³ Salwa Ismail, 'The Paradox of Islamist Politics', *Middle East Report*, 221 (winter 2001), pp. 34–9, p. 34.

when assessing the feasibility of implementing the vision of political Islam. He argues that the early ‘acritical’ references to religious virtue as the guiding force of Islamic society need to be read in the context of a fledgling political movement, trying to come to terms with exactly what it sought to achieve. Critiquing Roy’s premature conclusion that political Islam has failed, he prefers to see the departure from a radical and zealous discourse as an example of how the Islamist movement has evolved, rather than as proof that its fate was sealed because of ideological dead ends. Perhaps the central difference between Burgat’s approach and that of analysts like Addi or Roy, is his insistence that Islamism is about reconstructing identity rather than applying dogmatism to politics; he describes a movement which has moderated and revised its insistence on perennial virtues: ‘la lecture ahistorique et acritique de la référence religieuse a évolué pour s’inscrire ou pour se diluer dans une dynamique beaucoup plus large de reconstruction identitaire’.⁶⁴

The restrictive reading offered to us by Roy is also clear in his use of the term ‘neofundamentalist’, as he draws a careful distinction between Islamism and neofundamentalism. He suggests that in many cases what began as Islamist politics (‘une synthèse fragile entre islam et modernité politique’)⁶⁵ ‘slipped’ (‘glissé’) towards a more puritanical and populist attempt to generate a purification of the people, reinstate shari’a law, and thereby create an Islamic state; this is what he terms neofundamentalism, and he identifies the FIS as the ‘prototype’ of these movements.⁶⁶ He says their objective was less about effecting change at the level of

⁶⁴ François Burgat, *L’Islamisme en face*, new edition (Paris: La Découverte, 2002), p. 239.

⁶⁵ Roy, *L’Echec*, p. 102.

⁶⁶ This is certainly true of Ali Belhadj, whose sermons were renowned for their populist rhetoric, puritanism and conservatism, but the Djaz’ara (Algerianist) branch of the party was more open to compromise, dialogue and the political process, and, as we will see in Chapter III, emerged as the party’s main voice. For more information, see: Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*, fourth edition (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), Chapter 7; Tahi, ‘Algeria’s Democratisation Process’; and Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 66. See also: Abderrahim Lamchichi, ‘L’islam n’est pas

state policies than about fundamentally changing society (mores and popular expressions of Islam), but that they still sought to gain political representation in state institutions.⁶⁷ Part of Roy's assertion that political Islam has failed, therefore, is based on the fact that it shifted towards a less modern movement that was more closely aligned with its fundamentalist origins. Gilbert Achcar has suggested that no such shift ever took place, and that Roy is simply justifying his own shift towards increasing intolerance of Islamism:

« L'islamisme », ayant échoué, se serait transformé en ce que Roy appelle « néofondamentalisme », c'est-à-dire une interprétation socialement « conservatrice » de l'islam par opposition à l'interprétation « modernisatrice » – comme si ce caractère socialement conservateur (réactionnaire en réalité) ne se trouvait pas au cœur même dudit « islamisme » depuis les origines.⁶⁸

But even if we accept that Islamism did shift towards greater puritanism or populism, Roy's analysis operates a rigidity in defining political Islam that is not useful if we are to engage with the shifts taking place in the political landscape across the Muslim world. Even if we subscribe to Roy's view that political Islam as 'islamisme' has failed because it has evolved (or degenerated) towards something *slightly* different, it is unclear how we can dismiss the phenomenon as a whole, especially when he recognises that even the 'neofundamentalists' are still interested in joining the political ranks. The fact remains that diverse and evolving manifestations of political Islam (or Islamic politics) have been changing political relations within the Muslim world—and between it and the West—for some forty or fifty years; for Roy to insist on the failure of political Islam is to deny the fluidity and flexibility of a phenomenon that may very well be here to stay. Burgat has

monolithique', *Confluences Méditerranée*, 40 (winter 2001–2002), pp. 101–11, where Lamchichi qualifies the FIS as a strict embodiment of political Islam and not neofundamentalism, which he associates more with 'transnational' movements such as Al Qaida (p. 105).

⁶⁷ See in particular Chapter 5 of Roy, *L'Echec*.

⁶⁸ Gilbert Achcar, 'L'Orientalisme à rebours : de certaines tendances de l'orientalisme français depuis 1979', *Mouvements*, 54/2 (2008), pp. 127–44, p. 141.

emphasised this fluidity and embraced it as a sign of the dynamic nature of Islam's role in politics. He consistently argues against the persistent focus by certain observers on the more radical strains within Islamism, highlighting the danger that we will unfairly tarnish all those who invoke their faith in their political acts and overlook the extensive and diverse impact they are having:

Il n'existe pas en effet de définition académique consensuelle de la notion d'« islamisme ». [...] Cette incertitude terminologique traduit la diversité et le caractère évolutif des perceptions de dynamiques à l'œuvre à la fois dans le champ politique arabe (ou plus largement « musulman »), dans l'arène des relations internationales nord-sud ainsi que dans l'espace européen, au cœur de l'alchimie identitaire occidentale.⁶⁹

I wish to raise a final point about Roy's introduction of secularism to the debate, i.e., when he suggests that independent expressions of the Islamic faith have created a kind of autonomous (secular) space in which religion can enjoy separation from politics. I submit that this reflects a broad tendency among analysts of contemporary Islamism, albeit one that is difficult to avoid: by bringing our perspective back to terms we can readily understand, there is a danger of tainting our neutrality and imposing a 'Western' reading on a non-Western context. Although Roy's argument is adroitly constructed, it amounts to saying that Islamism has been defeated by the development of an autonomous secular space, as if this is the inevitable outcome of a move towards a potential increase in the influence of religion on politics. He writes of how religion has sought greater autonomy from the political process, in a neat reversal of European secularisation ('à l'inverse de l'avènement de la sécularisation en France et en Turquie, qui visait à sauver le politique du religieux').⁷⁰ This reinforces the view that for a stable polity to emerge, it must first work through the

⁶⁹ François Burgat, 'L'islam des uns et l'islamisme des autres', presentation given at a seminar hosted by the *Institut européen en sciences des religions* (IESR), January 2007, available at <http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr/index4338.html> [last accessed 20 August 2009].

⁷⁰ Roy, *L'Islam mondialisé*, p. 47.

same kind of antagonism between religion and politics experienced in the West, thereby strengthening old ethnocentric lines of argument. And this is the one thing that should be avoided if we are to attenuate the angry reactionism we have witnessed from some actors in the Muslim world, as Burgat has pointed out:

La tonalité triomphaliste et parfois revancharde des écrits qui nous annoncent l'« échec » ou le « dépassement » [des islamistes] montre par ailleurs que l'émergence d'une modernité qui ne soit plus perçue comme l'imposition unilatérale d'un modèle civilisationnel unique n'est pas encore à l'ordre du jour de la relation avec notre vieil alter-ego musulman. Or c'est là l'une des premières conditions de l'atténuation de la réaction islamiste et du penchant ethnocentrisme occidental dont, pour l'essentiel, cette réaction se nourrit depuis plus d'un siècle.⁷¹

Section 2.3 – François Burgat

It is important that Burgat should be the one to condemn this unilateral and ethnocentric reading of contemporary politics in the Muslim world. He stands out as one of the most sympathetic Western analysts of the Islamist movement, consistently arguing for porousness in our cultural evolution and challenging readers to imagine a world in which references from the 'other'—from 'les nouveaux partenaires obligés de notre relation au monde'⁷²—would inform life in the West as well as life outside of it. And yet, I would like to develop the view that he too is guilty of colouring our interpretation of Islamism with a Eurocentric description of what this movement stands for, providing readers with a familiar and easily digestible vision of the causes and stakes behind politics in the Muslim world. He does this through his careful insistence on the ultimately *politico-cultural* nature of Islamism, which, he says, invokes religious values and references more as a means of reconstructing Muslim

⁷¹ François Burgat, 'De l'islamisme au post islamisme : vie et mort d'un concept : les non-dits du « déclin islamiste »', *Esprit* (August–September 2001), pp. 82–93, p. 82.

⁷² François Burgat, *L'Islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida* (Paris: La Découverte, 2005), p. 14.

identity than as a true expression of Islamic faith. Before I develop this view, however, it is necessary to take a closer look at the cornerstones of Burgat's analysis.

We saw earlier how Addi has suggested that modernity is opposed on some fundamental level to the project of the FIS or other Islamist parties. This is something that has been dealt with extensively by analysts both within and outside the movement of political Islam, including Burgat, who emphasises the importance of giving voice to the men and women behind the Islamist movement, a strategy intended to show that the 'other' in this case—the 'homo islamicus'—is to be engaged with and not mistrusted.⁷³ One prominent *homo islamicus* from the Maghreb, Rachid al-Ghannouchi, explains that the dispute between Islamists and the ruling regimes in that region is not one that opposes modernity and fundamentalism. He says that political Islam is about seeking a particular type of modernity: 'one that emanates from within, one that is in response to local needs and that is in conformity with the local culture and value system'.⁷⁴ This mirrors the emphasis among communitarians on local heritage and the need to respect our constitutive past, and it even more closely mirrors a recurrent idea expressed by Burgat, who argues that the values of modernity are not being rejected by Islamists but integrated into an *endogenous* form of expression. He speaks of *reconciliation* between these values and the symbolism of the Muslim world ('les catégories et la terminologie du système symbolique musulman'): 'la poussée islamiste participe [...] d'un complexe

⁷³ Burgat defends his decision to include lengthy and unedited extracts from interviews with leading Islamist thinkers: 'Manière d'éluder le travail de théorisation, diront certains, don irréfléchi de matériaux vierges de toute appropriation par leur créateur, pour d'autres ; mais, qui sait ? moyen de limiter l'effet réducteur de toute lecture unilatérale. Possibilité donnée aussi au public extra-universitaire, que l'on espère ne pas décourager, d'entendre s'exprimer sans médiation l'*homo islamicus* et de vérifier ainsi, pour ceux qui en douterait encore, qu'il est bien né sur la même planète que nous' (*L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, p. 7).

⁷⁴ Al-Ghannouchi, 'Secularism in the Arab Maghreb', p. 100.

processus de réconciliation qui contribue davantage à étendre le champ de [la] modernisation qu'à en interrompre ou à en perturber la progression'.⁷⁵

Perhaps the key word in Burgat's assessment of Islamist movements is *endogenous* (endogène): this reflects his central thesis that Islamism is more about internal growth than outward attack, more about reappropriation than opposition, and more about reconciliation than rejection. The discourse employed by many Islamists may appear to Western observers to be a refusal of modernity, but Burgat argues that it is in fact an expression of their desire to participate in it by adding an all-important *local* perspective. He speaks of reclaiming the ideological, cultural and terminological *terrain* on which Muslims can express their vision of the modern world, using references and philosophical/intellectual/spiritual resources that resonate with the people and reflect the 'itinéraire historique différencié' of their culture. Burgat does not deny that aggression and hostility have marked the discourse of political Islam, but explains this in relation to the historically subjugated position of the Muslim world. According to this perspective, the need to 're-write' modernity using local references results from the context of aggression in which colonialism took place: 'la modernisation dans le contexte de l'agression coloniale a été écrite depuis l'extérieur du système symbolique musulman'; and it is this task of re-writing which the Islamist movement is now undertaking, as Burgat says, 'sous le couvert de son discours de refus'.⁷⁶

Elsewhere, Burgat explains the cultural significance of this discourse of refusal as part of the long process of decolonisation, which, like colonisation, he sees as having

⁷⁵ Burgat, *L'Islamisme en face*, p. 229.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

three primary phases or dimensions, each progressively longer than the next.⁷⁷ When colonial forces first arrive, it is their military might that is felt above all. The physical presence of military personnel and infrastructure is therefore the initial phase of colonisation, just as its absence, i.e., the departure of military personnel, is the first phase of decolonisation, marking political independence (sovereign army, national flag, etc.). The second phase of both processes, Burgat posits, is economic: the colonial occupier integrates the native economic structures into its own; similarly the second phase of decolonisation is the gradual shift towards economic independence. The final and most important phase is cultural: just as the invasive force slowly erodes indigenous cultural mores and references, so too does the independent people slowly begin to win back the terrain of its own cultural production. It is this final dimension of decolonisation that Islamists are expressing with their apparent rejection of Western culture:

[C]'est bien la remise en cause d'une relation culturelle nouée lors de la phase coloniale que manifeste la percée islamiste. [...] c'est bien « le troisième étage de la fusée de la décolonisation » qui s'est allumé, la troisième étape de la prise de distance à l'égard de l'Occident qui, sur le terrain où l'irruption étrangère a produit les effets à plus long terme, s'exprime aujourd'hui à travers l'islamisme.⁷⁸

Of course, this 'cultural' antipathy crucially extends to ideology and is not therefore limited to markers of identity. This is an example of how Burgat's analysis is at times restricted. So insistent is he that identity is the key factor behind the Islamist phenomenon, that even when it comes to something as ideologically charged as democratic governance he continues to cite the 'matrice identitaire' as the main driving force behind those who reject it. For Burgat, the attitude of Islamists who

⁷⁷ See Burgat *L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, Ch. 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 67. For a critique of this metaphor, see Achcar, 'L'Orientalisme à rebours', p. 138. Specifically, Achcar says that Burgat has overlooked the fact that Islamism in fact emerged at a time when cultural independence was being undermined by the increasing influence of American hegemony and globalised neoliberalism.

reject democracy is to say: ‘je suis contre « leur » démocratie, donc je commence à exister’.⁷⁹ It is ironic that Burgat should choose this Cartesian formula to represent the mindset of the average Islamist, as he is the one French analyst who insists on the need to embrace the difference of the Islamist heritage, with its endogenous references and emphasis on independence from the West. Although Burgat does not go as far as Roy, who as we have seen introduces (or imports) notions of secularism to his socio-political analysis of Islamism, he is nonetheless making a conscious effort to appeal to (or appease) the Western reader who may have reservations about political activists making overt references to faith. This, I suggest, is the key flaw in Burgat’s otherwise excellent work. His extensive thesis about the role of identity in the development of the Islamist movement is consistent and is backed up by lengthy and numerous citations from ‘primary’ sources, i.e., thinkers, activists and ordinary citizens from the Muslim world. But when he says, for example, that ‘their’—Western—democracy is being rejected for strategic reasons as part of an identity-based struggle, he effectively undermines the Islam in the Islamist discourse, depicting it as a mere tool that is used ostensibly to express the tenets of Islam but in reality to achieve something profane. There can be no doubt as to the profane nature of Islamism in some respects (we saw in Chapter I how it can be viewed as a political extension of earlier Islamic reformism and in Chapter III we will see the real political engagement of the FIS), but there is no reason why Burgat’s ‘matrice identitaire’ cannot be integrated into an assessment of Islamism as faith *and* Islamism as profane identity-based movement. Let us now take a closer look at some of the ways in which Burgat eschews this faith-based analysis.

⁷⁹ Burgat, *L’Islamisme en face*, p. 92.

Burgat's most recent monographic publication, *L'Islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida*, provides a good insight into how he assesses the main explicative factors behind the Islamist phenomenon. He first reiterates, in Chapter 1, his central thesis that this phenomenon is 'essentiellement identitaire', before going on to consider the 'temporalities'—or distinct and successive historical contexts—that have shaped the growth of this movement over the years.⁸⁰ Burgat identifies three such phases, the first of which is the dawn of Islamism in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which built on the intellectual (and less explicitly political) work of reformist figures like al-Afghani and Abduh to lead a political struggle against colonisation. The second is the period that stretches from the independence of many Muslim states (such as Pakistan in 1947 or Algeria in 1962) to the 1990s. The elite regimes in power during this period met with growing opposition from Islamist activists who decried the broken promises of the independence struggle and the authoritarian methods used to repress dissent. Finally, with the demise of the USSR, came a period in which there was a 'return' to the internationalisation and binary nature of the Islamist struggle: the enemy was once again the old imperial powers, as national leaders were increasingly seen as puppets of neocolonialism, as regional strife (the Israeli-Arab conflict) could be traced to the balance of world power, and as the world order was tipped in favour of powers like the US, which were no longer tied down by the 'régulation essentielle' previously provided by the Soviet Union.⁸¹

Burgat goes on to explore the interplay between these global factors and the specificities of various national instances of Islamism, constantly reminding the reader that our understanding of this movement depends on two 'levels' of analysis:

⁸⁰ See in particular pp. 44–5 of Burgat, *L'Islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida*.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 55.

Il est essentiel, pour pénétrer [dans le phénomène islamiste contemporain], de distinguer deux processus et donc deux niveaux d'analyse : d'une part, les raisons, essentiellement identitaires, pour lesquelles une génération d'acteurs politiques choisit de « parler musulman », c'est-à-dire de recourir de façon privilégiée et parfois ostentatoire à un lexique ou un vocabulaire emprunté à la culture musulmane ; d'autre part les usages diversifiés que ces acteurs font de ce lexique, chez eux ou dans l'arène Nord/Sud, en fonction de variables à la fois multiples, banales et profanes, qui déterminent leurs différentes revendications et mobilisations politiques.⁸²

He therefore relies on analysis that only identifies sociological and political factors, with no room for the role of faith as the determining factor behind Islamist action: it is 'essentially' about affirming one's identity, whether in a global or nationally specific context, and in ways that are 'banal' and 'profane'. The weakness of this restrictive approach is, ironically, identified by Burgat himself when he criticises certain sources of information about Islamism. He correctly argues that some academics have been guilty of a reductive analysis of Islamism, focusing on its radical strains and explicitly religious references in order to explain why it is incompatible with politics as we know it. He suggests this develops from a weakness in their understanding of (or willingness to engage with) sociological and political context; in other words, by default they focus on what is most visible—foreign and menacing terms like *fitna*, *jihad*, *takfir*, *salafist*—and lend it a disproportionate level of importance in their analysis. This, he says, is a refusal to separate the religious from the political: analysts should realise that what appears to be religious zeal is in fact eminently political, and those who fail to do so are opting for the 'confort d'une explication culturaliste globalisante'.⁸³ Yet Burgat opts for the same level of 'comfort' when he endeavours to pitch Islamism exclusively as a rational and comprehensible movement that grew out of factors to which we can all relate. Indeed, he is so willing to separate the religious from the political that there is

⁸² Ibid, p. 15.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 21.

virtually no religious content at all in his vision of Islamism, except as a ‘cloak’ beneath which lies an infinity of profane ambitions: ‘la rhétorique islamiste, sous le manteau du discours religieux, peut véhiculer une infinité de revendications tout à fait profanes, non seulement économiques ou sociales mais également, de plus en plus souvent, démocratiques’.⁸⁴ This vision can be compared in some respects to that of John Esposito, who has collaborated with Burgat and shares his view that Islamism reflects a wider ‘quest for identity’. However, Esposito also recognises that for those who seek a revival of Islam, its application is not simply one ideological option among many, but a political *and* theological imperative; Islamism is a *socio-religious* phenomenon.⁸⁵ By contrast, Burgat’s depiction of an Islamism that developed for familiar reasons, as opposed to more mystical and foreign beliefs, has two negative effects: it denies the profundity of an Islamist’s attachment to God (or at least the role of that profundity in Islamist action) and thereby risks alienating Islamist readers who might see a potential ally in Burgat; and it seeks to reassure Western readers of the acceptability of Islamism by deliberately understating at least one of the motivating factors behind the movement.

Burgat has elsewhere explained why we must be careful not to over-determine the theological factor in our analysis of Islamism. He suggests, correctly in my view, that the label ‘Islamic’ can be misused to make the religious variable the guiding force in politics in the Muslim world.⁸⁶ Such misuse has the effect of ‘over-theologising’ phenomena that can be (also) explained in terms of ‘profane’ objectives on the part of the political actors concerned, but also leads to the implication that only the

⁸⁴ Burgat, ‘De l’islamisme au post islamisme’, p. 85.

⁸⁵ See in particular John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). For a collaboration between the authors, see François Burgat and John L. Esposito (eds), *Modernising Islam: Religion in the Public Sphere in Europe and the Middle East* (London: Hurst, 2002).

⁸⁶ François Burgat, ‘A propos du terrorisme islamique (entretien avec Jean-François Daguzan)’, *Maghreb-Machrek*, 188 (summer 2006), pp. 11–20.

Muslim world is affected to such an extent by the religious variable. Why, Burgat asks, do we seek the expertise of Islamic scholars to explain the tension in the Middle East, but not engage scholars of Judaism or Christianity when assessing the policies of Israel or the US?⁸⁷ Of course he is being provocative; we know that the overt invocation of Islamic principles by violent protagonists in Palestine, for example, is an invitation for analysts to determine whether there is any inherent quality in Islam that makes it conducive to violence, and that neither Israel nor the US justify their foreign policy explicitly in terms of religious doctrine (even though public references to religion are not rare in political discourse). But Burgat is right to remind us that the easy way out is to explain everything on the basis of religious fanaticism; we must allow a greater level of complexity to permeate our analysis. The problem is that he resists ‘sur-théologisation’ to such an extent that he barely admits the reality of the Islamic factor into his analysis. Consider this lengthy citation from a leading Moroccan Islamist, Abdessalam Yassine, in discussion with Burgat:

Vous, observateurs de l’extérieur, en lisant la production des islamistes..., en analysant leurs discours, vous percevez seulement la partie de l’iceberg qui est émergée, la chose commune que l’on peut voir directement..., c’est-à-dire la dénonciation de la domination culturelle occidentale..., la dénonciation de la mauvaise gestion des affaires, l’existence de cette injustice sociale... Ça, vous le percevez... Le reste, le non-dit, ou plutôt le non-perçu qui est cette spiritualité, ce retour à Dieu, pour nous, dont l’organe spirituel n’est pas complètement oblitéré..., ça existe. Et c’est ce qui nous réunit. [...] Moi, je vous dirais que ce qui me lie à ces gens qui sont là devant vous..., ce n’est pas tant la mobilisation idéologique au nom de l’islam pour combattre ceux qui nient notre personnalité, notre authenticité..., notre adversaire historique..., ce n’est pas tant cela que notre attachement à Dieu. Dans vos articles, je lis l’analyse d’un Occidental pur qui sympathise avec l’islamisme, ça..., oui..., l’islam vous est sympathique. Mais, pour vous, cette région spirituelle reste volontairement opaque. Vous ne voulez pas y voir, vous ne voulez pas y regarder. Je retrouve en fait le travers de ces intellectuels qui font

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 12.

la partie belle à leur point de vue sans tenir compte de celui des autres. C'est ce qui leur fait adopter cette interprétation, à mon gré un peu facile et superficielle, qui consiste à expliquer le phénomène islamique par des déterminismes économiques et politiques.⁸⁸

I have chosen to cite Yassine at length as he clearly expresses the kind of frustration which I suspect is felt by many Islamists reading Western analysis of their ideological stance. Indeed, this frustration must be even more acute in the case of Burgat's work: at least in the examples of Roy or Addi, there is clear opposition on the part of the author to the fundamentals of the Islamist movement, but Burgat is a clear supporter of its right to exist and an advocate of engagement with it. One feels, however, that the essence of Islamist thought and action (at least as perceived by the Islamists themselves) is somewhat diluted when explained almost exclusively in terms of economics or the historic imbalance between East and West. This is what Yassine combats when he evokes a dimension that is unfamiliar and even anathema to Burgat's intellectual *modus operandi*—the cosmic, the divine.⁸⁹ He reproaches Burgat, who has the potential to be a friend of Islamism, for giving excessive value to the Western scholarly perspective. The irony of this is that Burgat himself emphasises the 'plasticity' of Islamism and argues that we must embrace its 'unsettling diversity' if we are to understand it fully,⁹⁰ yet he is not ready to leave behind the security and comfort of an analysis grounded in the rigour of sociology or political science. And in doing so he adopts the kind of obscuring tactics employed, he says, by political leaders intent on discrediting the Islamist opposition.

⁸⁸ Cited in Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, pp. 71–2.

⁸⁹ The debate is cited at length in Burgat's work and continues over several pages. Yassine later invites Burgat to represent the fraught relationship between the West and Islam in a 'cosmic' context (ibid, p. 73), and, when challenged by Burgat to explain how the message of Islamic thinkers has taken so many different forms over the centuries, Yassine reminds him that 'il ne s'agit pas de savoir..., il s'agit de sentir, aussi' (ibid).

⁹⁰ He suggests that any explanation for the Islamist phenomenon 'doit être recherchée sur un terrain sociologique où, bien loin des certitudes monolithiques des « experts », règnent une déroutante diversité, une plasticité inattendue des références, d'insolites exceptions à la règle et autant de déconcertantes évolutions' (*L'Islamisme en face*, p. 21).

For it is not only academic or journalistic observers that Burgat accuses of ‘over-theologising’ the basis of Islamist action; he reserves his harshest criticism for those in power who oppose the Islamists by refusing them admission into the political arena on the basis of their religious fanaticism. And this applies just as much to Western powers as it does to those directly ‘combating’ the Islamists on the ground. From Paris to Algiers, and from Tel Aviv to Moscow, the threat of the ‘fundamentalist’ or the ‘fanatic’ is brandished, Burgat says, in an effort to criminalise legitimate political opponents and garner electoral dividends:

La criminalisation idéologique de ceux qui [...] se retrouvent souvent sur la première ligne de la contestation, fonctionne plus que jamais comme une efficace machine à dissoudre dans l’émotionnel et l’irrationnel oppositions et résistances, aussi légitimes qu’elles puissent être, aux maîtres des ordres politiques nationaux, régionaux et internationaux. En Algérie, les leaders d’une junte militaire passée maîtresse dans la manipulation de la terreur, pour avoir pris soin de se poser en « rempart contre l’intégrisme », ont pu acquérir *ipso facto* la confiance sans limite des institutions financières internationales et bourrer impunément leurs prisons et leurs urnes. [...] Les leaders occidentaux eux-mêmes savent bien que la recette de la « menace intégriste » contient de mystérieuses enzymes capables de convertir les angoisses en tous genres de leurs concitoyens en autant de dividendes électoraux.⁹¹

This is what Burgat later describes as a tactic designed to ‘seal’ the Islamist movement in the religious in order to better exclude it from the political.⁹² This is a phenomenon we will be looking at in more detail in Chapter IV, in relation to the accusations brought against the Algerian regime for its behaviour during the conflict, but for now let us consider Burgat’s theoretical arguments supporting the claim that officials distort the nature of the Islamist movement in their own favour. He seems to argue that a kind of short-cut policy was adopted by the West (the US mainly, but also by its supporters in Europe and within the Arab world) in its response to the

⁹¹ Burgat, ‘De l’islamisme au post islamisme’, pp. 83–4.

⁹² ‘Enfermer l’autre dans le religieux pour mieux l’expulser du politique’ (sub-title of Chapter 9 in Burgat, *L’Islamisme à l’heure d’Al-Qaida*).

increasing terrorist threat from Muslim extremists. This meant that militarily it would make irresponsible use of its weaponry in order to achieve results quickly (by, for example, bombing Afghanistan almost indiscriminately in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks) and would flout international rules in its engagement with the enemy in its eagerness to deliver justice (Burgat speaks of the ‘guantanamoisation de l’adversaire’ as a Western version of *takfir*); and that intellectually it would eschew any rational examination of the causes behind the attacks, preferring instead to ‘ignorer les revendications profanes’ made by the Islamists and ‘criminaliser l’exotisme du vocabulaire employé pour les exprimer’.⁹³

In my discussion of fundamentalism and applications of the term in Chapter I, I referred to Salman Sayyid, who argued that violence should be seen as something systemic and not only the preserve of illicit networks working outside or in subversion of the state. This reminds us of the danger of a binary vision of world power—those representing *official* power and those trying to corrupt it; those who support terrorism and those who fight it; those who are ‘with us’ and those who are ‘against us’.⁹⁴ Burgat is challenging a similar process of simplification on the part of the US and its allies, when they reinforce rather than seek to understand the divide that has apparently opened up between the Muslim world and the West. This ‘short-cut’ is designed to depict a binary world in which the actions of the other are always irrational and unacceptable, and in which any attempt to understand the other is brandished as perverse fascination or even complicity: ‘comme si l’enjeu n’était pas de mieux comprendre les ressorts profonds des agressions anti-occidentales pour

⁹³ Ibid, p. 194.

⁹⁴ Sayyid, pp. xi–xii.

tenter d'y mettre fin, mais au contraire de les alimenter pour mieux justifier une posture de domination'.⁹⁵

One wonders, however, whether Burgat is not also guilty of taking short-cuts. Where he accuses Western powers (and pro-US Arab leaders) of criminalising the religiosity of their adversary, is he not guilty of over-rationalising it and underestimating its impact? And where he accuses them of preferring simplistic analysis that avoids the challenging work of understanding the other, is he not guilty of a similar tactic, i.e., presenting the other in terms that make sense to the 'rational' reader? If a pattern is to be identified in the tactics of both 'sides'—those who tend to oppose Islamism and those who tend to have sympathy for it—it might be that religion is either over- or under-emphasised. "Listen to this vitriolic and zealous discourse", one 'camp' might say, "we cannot engage with these people". "Don't be fooled by these religious invocations", the other might say, "they are merely a counter-cultural cover for perfectly rational and profane objectives". Burgat, as we have seen, rejects the excessive use that is made of the 'Islamic' label. But he sometimes appears unwilling to accept it even when applied to something as historically observable as Islamic culture. When denouncing the early colonial attempts by the French to supplant Islam with their strict *laïcité*, for example, Burgat feels the need to use inverted commas around the word 'Islamic', reminding us that the culture was above all 'locale et endogène'.⁹⁶ In other words, 'Islamic' for him is just a label used to describe the way in which a given people expresses itself

⁹⁵ Burgat, *L'Islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida*, p. 194.

⁹⁶ 'En cantonnant progressivement les territoires d'expression de la culture religieuse « islamique » (mais avant tout locale et endogène) à la sphère privée du statut personnel, l'introduction de la « laïcité » a consacré une sorte de déconnexion entre la culture endogène et la chose publique' (ibid, p. 16).

culturally, no different from the secular or mythological references used in other cultures.

Section 3 – Sovereignty, Islamism, legitimacy: potential incompatibilities?

So far, this chapter has focused on restrictive interpretations of political Islam. This is relevant to my overall analysis of the FIS, but especially in relation to Chapter IV, where I discuss the tactics of the military in establishing an ad hoc *Haut comité d'Etat* (HCE) to run the Algerian state after January 1992, and more especially, its tactics in the war on the Islamic 'terrorists'. Chapter IV should make it clear that the intention was to distort the true nature of the political opposition represented by the FIS, even where this required brutal repression and falsification of the violence (although I am careful to emphasise that this analysis remains at the level of speculation, despite considerable evidence). To complete Chapter II, however, I would like to address a few questions that will be particularly relevant to Chapter III: sovereignty, Islamic governance and legitimacy. This is intended to complement the next chapter, where I examine the detail of what the FIS did as a legalised party, arguing that their respect for procedure (including popular sovereignty and the ballot box) made them politically legitimate.

Section 3.1 – Popular sovereignty and Islamic governance

At the beginning of this chapter I highlighted the difficulty of defining democracy. However, perhaps one of its least controversial defining characteristics is that it is determined by popular elections and that it alternates at regular intervals in accordance with the results of these elections. This is a *procedural* element, which

does not carry the same potential for debate as the *ideological* elements of democracy, such as the role played by religion or the influence of community values. It nonetheless presents difficulties in the context of Islamist governance. The main problem is that a system of popular elections implies popular sovereignty: the people are the ultimate arbiters of governance. Islamists may argue that popular sovereignty is inadmissible as only God can be sovereign, implying that accession to power through elections is un-Islamic. Consider the following remarks by Abū'l A'lā Mawdūdī (1903–1979), a leading South Asian Islamist who founded the Pakistani group, Jamāt-i-Islāmī: 'Islam, speaking from the view-point of political philosophy, is the very antithesis of secular Western democracy [...] [Islam] altogether repudiates the philosophy of popular sovereignty and rears its polity on the foundations of the sovereignty of God and the vicegerency (*Khilāfah*) of man'.⁹⁷ This is not as damning an assessment of democracy as it seems, however. The key point here is that man acts as God's vicegerent, so rather than a theocracy governed by a religious elite, Mawdūdī's vision is of a 'theo-democracy', whereby 'Muslims have been given a limited popular sovereignty under the suzerainty of God. The executive under this system of government is constituted by the general will of the Muslims who have also the right to depose it'.⁹⁸

On this question of sovereignty, I would like to return to Lahouari Addi, who has addressed it in great detail. His analysis will be useful in relation to Chapter III, where I consider the attitudes of the FIS in relation to procedural elements of Algeria's transition to democracy (constitutionality, relations with the incumbent

⁹⁷ Abū'l A'lā Mawdūdī, 'Political Theory of Islam', in Khurshid Ahmad (ed.), *Islam: Its Meaning and Message* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1976), pp. 147–71, pp. 159–60.

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 160–1. For more on the agency of man in Islam, see Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), where he argues that there is a case for democracy in the Muslim world, 'founded on a fundamental Islamic idea about the special status of human beings in God's creation' (p. 7).

administration, legal protest, diplomacy, etc.). Once again, Addi's position typifies the kind of restrictions I have highlighted so far in this chapter. Broadly speaking, this position is open to the specificities of the Arab political context, careful not to demonise the FIS or Islamist groups in general, but ultimately rigid when it comes to assessing the fundamental (or 'universal') tenets of democracy and the place of religion therein. More specifically, in relation to sovereignty, Addi argues that in itself sovereignty is not what is at issue, as man has always been sovereign (by making rules and determining methods for governance); it is our awareness ('prise de conscience') of our own sovereignty that is the critical moment in the path towards secularisation and, as he sees it, democratisation.⁹⁹ Several elements require explanation here: What is meant by this 'prise de conscience'? Why does it mark the start of the secularisation process? Why is this crucial to democratisation? And, most importantly, how do these questions tie in with Addi's understanding of procedural democracy in the Algerian context?

Awareness of man's role in the exercise of sovereignty begins when the debate about the temporal or divine nature of power is made public, Addi says.¹⁰⁰ This in turn means that the secularisation process has begun: there may be violent resistance to the view that divine authority can be supplanted, but even a minority asserting such a view represents the kernel of secularism. It is the public element of this debate that is crucial here. Addi repeatedly emphasises that modern (democratic) politics must be rational and public, and that notions of divine authority have no place in political debate.¹⁰¹ To introduce a religious element to the electoral process is to rob

⁹⁹ Lahouari Addi, 'L'islam est-il soluble dans la démocratie ?', *Mouvements* (October 1999), pp. 1–6, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ See in particular: Lahouari Addi, *L'Algérie et la démocratie : Pouvoir et crise dans l'Algérie contemporaine* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994), Ch. 7.

voters of their rational choice, he says, as believers cannot be expected to vote against that which is depicted as the divine project. Democratisation, therefore, grows out of the secularisation process: a public debate about the nature of power should ultimately eliminate the 'partisan' element of religion from the choices facing voters.

This view is intrinsically linked to an understanding of secularisation and democratisation as experienced in Europe when the Church's authority was challenged by secularising forces and its influence was effectively depoliticised. The context of Muslim North Africa is by no means the same, a point Addi is careful to emphasise: 'la prise de conscience de la souveraineté de l'homme [...] prend des formes différentes selon les pays'.¹⁰² The depoliticisation of Islam is a particular challenge because it is structured in such a way that ordinary believers can invoke religious authority when speaking of temporal (and therefore political) issues, unlike in the Catholic Church, where only those belonging to the formal ecclesiastical hierarchy can speak on behalf of the Church. Furthermore, as Addi points out, Islam has played a highly political role in recent history as a mobilising force in the struggle against colonialism and as an essential element of nationalist sentiment.¹⁰³ This challenge is by no means insurmountable, however. Addi recommends a careful distinction between the depoliticisation and marginalisation of religion from public life. While arguing in favour of the former, he says that Islam need not be marginalised and should continue to exercise a moral authority by reminding society of the need to protect certain values:

Il serait même souhaitable que la mosquée ait dans la société une autorité morale pour appeler à la sauvegarde des valeurs humaines que véhicule le message divin [...]

¹⁰² Addi, 'L'islam est-il soluble dans la démocratie ?', p. 2.

¹⁰³ Addi, *L'Algérie et la démocratie*, p. 162.

Cependant, pour que la mosquée puisse incarner cette autorité morale, il lui faudra se tenir à l'écart de la compétition pour le pouvoir.¹⁰⁴

So, to a certain extent, Addi here appears to defend the place of Islam in an established democratic society. Elsewhere he reinforces the notion of Islam as a potentially democratising force; this is the idea that Islam has a role to play 'upstream' of democratisation. By comparing and contrasting the contexts of modern-day Algeria and 16th-century Europe, when the Church's authority was being challenged, Addi identifies a paradoxical parallel: the move towards secularisation in Europe (a retreat from religion) was an attempt to wrest power from the hands of a small minority, while the move towards an Islamised Algeria (increased religiosity) is an attack on the FLN/ANP and their authoritarian and elitist hold on power. In both cases, the objective is to assert popular claims to governance:

Dans un pays comme l'Algérie, la revendication de la souveraineté divine est populaire en réaction à la privatisation du pouvoir par les militaires qui monopolisent le pouvoir [...] Dans ce contexte, affirmer que la souveraineté n'appartient qu'à Dieu, c'est signifier qu'elle appartient à tout le monde (Vox populi, Vox dei) et non à une poignée d'individus [...] Une telle revendication de souveraineté divine exprime en réalité une profonde aspiration à la participation au champ de l'Etat [...] Aussi, la popularité [du slogan « la souveraineté n'appartient qu'à Dieu »] dans les pays musulmans a paradoxalement un contenu démocratique.¹⁰⁵

He also suggests that the invocation of Islam by the FIS in its political campaign is the 'expression du souhait de rééquilibrer les relations entre les gouvernants et les gouvernés', again suggesting there is something inherently just and democratic in what the party set about to achieve.¹⁰⁶ So he appears in favour of a moral and public role for mosques and seems to depict Islamism as a democratising force. A detailed reading of Addi's analysis, however, reveals that he does not view the FIS—or any

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Addi, 'L'islam est-il soluble dans la démocratie ?', pp. 2–3.

¹⁰⁶ Addi, *L'Algérie et la démocratie*, p. 190.

other Islamist party—as democratic *per se*. First of all, the above citation does not actually endorse the FIS project as a democratic one, but simply says that a shift towards ‘popular’ power in Algeria would have been a move towards greater democracy and away from authoritarianism. The implication here is that while there was a desire for democracy among the people, that desire was merely harnessed—and not necessarily embodied—by the FIS. This suggestion leads us to a key question in our analysis: if we consider that the cancellation of the January 1992 elections was a setback for Algerian democracy, then is it because the people were robbed of the chance to dilute the power of the bureaucratic-military elite or because a democratic party was robbed of its inevitable victory? Is it because undemocratic forces were *not* defeated or because a democratic force *was*? To what extent do we *admit* the FIS into our assessment of the political context of the early 1990s? Did this party ride on the back of something stronger (the people’s ‘profonde aspiration à la participation au champ de l’Etat’) or was it the party itself that gave rise to such aspirations?

Addi makes it clear that in his view the FIS was not the answer to Algeria’s democratic shortcomings. He did however see the potential for the FIS, if elected, to play an indirect role in the growth of democracy in Algeria. Criticising the military intervention of January 1992, he argues that electoral success for the FIS would have been a ‘régression féconde’¹⁰⁷ in the long term: having participated in the democratic process, the Algerian people would later have refused to allow the FIS to turn back the clock on the country’s progress, as Addi suspects it would have done. The potential ‘fecundity’ of FIS involvement was that by planting the seed of democracy,

¹⁰⁷ See: Lahouari Addi, ‘Les missions paradoxales du FIS’, *Libération*, 6 January 1992; ‘L’Algérie, le FIS et la construction démocratique’, *El Watan*, 8 January 1992; ‘Le sabre et la piété’, *Le Monde diplomatique*, February 1992.

it would later be resisted by emerging groups if it attempted to erode the civil liberties the people had come to expect: ‘la défense du processus électoral peut ainsi donner une base populaire aux forces démocratiques’.¹⁰⁸ This is why Addi and others argue that the FIS, if elected, would have been forced to govern democratically or fail in office—to ‘sink or swim’ politically.¹⁰⁹ Identifying what he sees as the central dichotomy in Islamist politics, Addi argues that the FIS failed (indeed, was never given the chance) to reconcile its rhetoric on divine sovereignty with the imperatives of governance. Regardless of how it might have justified the turnaround, he says, once in office the FIS would have been forced to separate the temporal from the spiritual by exercising the sovereignty granted to it by the people: ‘une fois au pouvoir, la souveraineté doit être exercée d’une manière ou d’une autre, quel que soit l’habillage verbal qui la justifiera’.¹¹⁰

Section 3.2 – Legitimacy: are we asking the right questions?

This explains one of Addi’s central claims—that to assert the primacy of divine sovereignty is a position that can only be adopted while in opposition. This suggests that the spiritual is something that can be invoked as a political tool only—a means to an end. In other words, it would have to give way to temporal imperatives once those who invoke it have made it to power and have to face the job of governance. A useful way of looking at this issue is through the lens of *legitimacy*, a key issue in Algerian politics. In Chapter I, we looked at the search for legitimacy in the process of nation-building and how it can lead to the exercise of power in a way that emphasises unity, sameness and historic justification for the modern form a nation

¹⁰⁸ Addi, *L’Algérie et la démocratie*, p. 188.

¹⁰⁹ See: Lahouari Addi, ‘Algeria’s Democracy between the Islamists and the Elite’, *Middle East Report*, 175 (March–April 1992), pp. 36–8; Abderrahim Lamchichi, *L’Islamisme politique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001); and Olivier Carré, *Radicalismes islamiques* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1986), p. 17.

¹¹⁰ Addi, *L’Algérie et la démocratie*, p. 194.

takes. In Chapter IV, we will see how the military stand accused of using abhorrent tactics to delegitimise the Islamist movement, and also how the question of legitimacy was central to the efforts of the *Haut comité d'Etat* to find the right candidate to serve as the public face of the regime. Here, with regard to the invocation of Islam in politics, the question is one of religious legitimacy and electoral legitimacy and whether or not the two can ever coincide. Addi argues they cannot, at least not for long:

Au départ [...] il est probable que légitimité religieuse et légitimité électorale coïncideront. Pour les islamistes cette légitimité est structurelle et durera dans le temps. Or rien n'est moins sûr, car dans la pratique, avec l'expérience d'une vie politique pluraliste, la légitimité électorale et la légitimité religieuse se distingueront de plus en plus nettement chez l'électeur moyen qui se rendra compte que ni dans l'opposition, ni dans le pouvoir, les islamistes n'apporteront de vraies solutions à ses problèmes quotidiens.¹¹¹

It is this refusal to imagine an effective Islamist government that seals Addi's analysis. Despite his openness to change (we have seen how he favours the growth of democratic forces to redress the balance between Algeria's governors and governed) and his emphasis on the relativity of specific context (democratic aspirations in modern Algeria, he says, are expressed in ways that are very different from the founding period of European democracy), he is adamant that Islam can be no more than a useful *tool* in combating the authoritarianism of the state.

But perhaps it is misguided to ask whether the FIS could have brought religious legitimacy to the electoral legitimacy of the polls, or whether it could have participated in the democratic institutions of the state. The reason, of course, is that there was no pre-existing electoral legitimacy and no pre-existing democratic institutions. Algeria in the 1990s was in transition. The single-party regime of the

¹¹¹ Ibid, pp. 184–5.

FLN could hardly be said to have had electoral legitimacy: by 1992 only municipal elections had taken place since the admission of other parties into the political sphere, and these had been won comprehensively by the FIS, making it the only party with electoral legitimacy. And the democratic nature of the FLN regime is hardly even debatable: quite apart from the fact that the FLN had not been elected as such, it is widely agreed that the people felt alienated and let down by the state, a fact illustrated by the upheaval of Black October in 1988. This point has been made by Vickie Langohr in relation to the Islamist question broadly, and by Abderrahim Lamchichi in relation to Algeria specifically. Langohr argues that by asking whether Islamists are prepared to play an active role in democracy, we assume a political context which does not exist in most of the Muslim world.¹¹² Lamchichi, for his part, identifies the Algerian state as having what he calls *instrumental* legitimacy: by imposing its control over all aspects of life (social, political, religious, cultural) and by maintaining a fragile equilibrium between the varying demands of the elite, the state generated a kind of unilateral legitimacy that remained intact until the pressures of 1988, when, Lamchichi says, ‘la pénurie des ressources devint trop grande et que les demandes adressées à l’Etat dépassèrent ses capacités à y répondre’.¹¹³ He argues that the crisis of the 1990s was not the result of events immediately preceding the conflict, but that the steady emergence of authoritarian practices had left Algeria—

¹¹² ‘[T]he question of whether Islamist movements are prepared to participate in democratic politics is by and large an inaccurate one. This question assumes a political context in which democratic politics actually exist and that Islamists choose or decline to try their luck at them. In fact, very few examples of such politics exist in most of the Muslim world, particularly in the Middle East’ (Vickie Langohr, ‘Of Islamists and Ballot Boxes: Rethinking the Relationship between Islamisms and Electoral Politics’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 33/4 (November 2001), pp. 591–610, p. 592).

¹¹³ Abderrahim Lamchichi, *Le Maghreb face à l’islamisme : le Maghreb entre tentations autoritaires, essor de l’islamisme et demandes démocratiques* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1997), p. 81. William B. Quandt describes this legitimacy as the product of a ‘certain kind of authoritarianism’, whereby the ‘state would provide security, order, welfare, education, and jobs in return for political passivity, or at least controlled access to the political arena’ (*Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria’s Transition from Authoritarianism* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), p. 84).

and other Arab states¹¹⁴—with democratic lacunae or shortcomings that made it ‘illusory’ to speak of any kind of transition to democracy. He describes attitudes within the post-independence Algerian state as follows:

Depuis l’indépendance, en effet, les élites dirigeantes ont développé des pratiques autoritaires reposant notamment sur une représentation selon laquelle la société civile devait se construire par le haut, par l’Etat, sous l’étroite surveillance des cercles dirigeants. Aucune véritable autonomie n’était reconnue à la société ; toute expression démocratique était étouffée.¹¹⁵

One final point should be made about the way we frame our questions. There is another, more deep-rooted problem in addressing the potential for a party like the FIS to be democratic. An inherent incompatibility exists between, on the one hand, rational analysis that sees Islamism as a tool, an ideological utopia, an expression of Algeria’s mythical relationship with violence, etc., and on the other, the spiritual arguments of Islamists who will never see such analysis as anything but temporal talk, subordinate to divine truth. There is a sense of inevitability to this ideological debate: it will always end with each side dismissing the other because they can never come to terms with the fundamental difference between their chosen points of departure. The ideological debate is worth having, but its direct application to politics on the ground is limited. If what we are interested in is seeing representative, constitutional politics and the capacity for authoritarianism to be challenged legally, then we should be more concerned by what happened in Algeria in January 1992 than by the boundaries of modern politics. Do we want to push democracy forward by its preference for inclusion, pluralism and free elections? Or do we want to determine who can and cannot join? John Esposito reminds us of a crucial irony in the hostility towards emerging forces in Muslim politics. The more an Islamic party

¹¹⁴ See Lamchichi, *L’Islamisme politique*, Chapter 7.

¹¹⁵ Lamchichi, *Le Maghreb face à l’islamisme*, p. 81.

is willing to participate in mainstream society, he says, the greater the perceived threat: 'The impact of [Islamic] revivalism can now be seen by the extent to which it has become part of mainstream Muslim life and society and not simply the province of marginalized and alienated groups. Ironically, this has led many to see it as an even greater threat'.¹¹⁶ In cases where these groups are seeking acceptance from the political establishment, he says, each side faces a test:

On the one hand, governments in the Muslim world and in the West that espouse political liberalization and democracy are challenged to remain true to these very principles. On the other hand, Islamic movements, should they come to power, will be challenged to extend to their opposition and to minorities the very principles of political pluralism and participation which they now demand for themselves.¹¹⁷

Esposito's remarks are a reminder that the emergence of atypical political forces is often unwelcome and always requires compromise. It is accompanied by intense ideological debate, where attempts are made by the new arrivals to redraw the boundaries of the existing order, and where corresponding attempts are made by the masters of that order to limit this endeavour. And this is how it should be: that which is built up over time deserves respect and temperance on the part of those who wish to alter it, but long-standing hegemony also needs to be challenged or even subverted at regular intervals in history. The desire to subvert the dominant (Western) political order is evident in the often inflammatory rhetoric employed by Islamists across the Muslim world, yet my research has taught me that—in the case of the FIS at least—there is a corresponding desire to participate in that order, albeit modified to accommodate new representatives with fresh mandates.

That communitarianism should have featured in Western political theory is a reminder that at least some of the values espoused by Islamists would not unduly

¹¹⁶ Esposito, *The Islamic Threat*, pp. 209–10.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 211.

upset the framework of modern politics. Further proof of this, as I suggested earlier, can be found in international law, where the sacrosanct status of the individual in human rights is now being nuanced following the realisation that the theoretical equality of all individuals is sometimes insufficient, and that people may also need protection on the basis of their group identity.¹¹⁸ While this may not in itself legitimise Islamist aspirations for the public recognition of community-wide morality, it nonetheless reminds us that our understanding of modernity can and should continue to be revised. Such an approach would better serve analysts like Lahouari Addi and Olivier Roy, whose excellent contributions to and knowledge of political Islam are nonetheless restrained by rigid barriers that would ultimately refuse parties like the FIS entry into the modern political paradigm. Even the greatest willingness to see developments in that direction, however, can also be marked by Eurocentrism, as my analysis of Burgat shows. His objective of convincing Western readers that Islamists need not be feared relies too heavily on the view that their religious discourse is in fact a cover for their rational and profane political ambitions. One might suggest that those who wish to sell Islamism underplay its sacred foundations, while those who wish to condemn it over-emphasise this same element as proof of its zealotry and fundamental incompatibility with sound governance. This second approach is the central theme of Chapter IV, but first let us consider how the FIS evolved politically in the short period between its legalisation (September 1989) and its effective demise.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ As early as 1840, Alexis De Tocqueville had already picked up on the potential lacunae of individualist equality, arguing that while it tempers the presence of tyranny in government, it leaves individuals detached from their fellow citizens (De Tocqueville, 'Quelle espèce de despotisme les nations démocratiques ont à craindre', in *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, pp. 345–52).

¹¹⁹ The demise of the FIS was a gradual but steady process. There is no key date on which it ceased to exert influence on Algerian politics, but I suggest in Chapter III that the failure of the Sant'Egidio platform in January 1995 was the ultimate rejection of compromise by the state. From then on, the party's readmittance into the political sphere looked increasingly out of reach.

Chapter III: Islamist Uncertainty, Politicking, Legality and the FIS

*Le pays a besoin d'une cure
de vérité, d'une cure
d'honnêteté* – Mohamed
Boudiaf¹

Having adopted a theoretical approach to the nature of Algerian Islamism in the first two chapters, I would like now to focus on specific elements of the political climate in Algeria leading up to the conflict that broke out in January 1992. The aim of this chapter is to examine the political nature of the FIS; in Chapter IV this will be seen to be in direct contrast to the representation of the Islamist movement as made by the regime during the conflict.

I will show how the party developed more or less steadily towards a moderate discourse and proved flexible in the face of political imperatives, ultimately identifying itself more with the popular cries of the 'marche pour sauver la démocratie' of 2 January 1992 ("Ni Etat policier, ni République islamique")² than with the authoritarian and regressive politics so feared by the regime and its Western backers around the time of the 1991 elections. In Chapter I, I showed how in terms of nation-building the case of Algeria may be seen to represent a middle ground between Smith's vertical and lateral *ethnies*, and more particularly how the role of the FIS reflects that of Smith's intelligentsia in bridging the gap between a passive understanding of demotic heritage and an active shift towards modern nation-state identity. Chapter II was intended to follow on from this assessment of a *balanced* FIS by arguing against analysis that refuses the middle ground of Islamism. Via the debate on communitarianism, I argued that an Islamist form of governance need not

¹ 'Lettre ouverte de Mohamed Boudiaf à Chadli Bendjedid', printed in a *Parti de la Révolution Socialiste* pamphlet, 30 October 1979.

² *Le Monde/Libération*, 03, 04, 05 January 1992.

be a radical challenge to democracy as we know it, and that modernity could very well accommodate some moderation of its individualist emphasis and greater blurring of the public-private divide. And we saw how, in different ways, Addi, Roy and Burgat refused the reality of a spiritual, democratic Islamist voice. This chapter will depict a moderate and *balanced* FIS, a party that embraces the modern democratic process but which has its roots in Islam. This balance becomes all the more apparent as one traces the party's evolution from its formation in 1989 through to the latter stages of the conflict.

Section 1 – Emergence of the Islamist movement: early uncertainties

Section 1.1 – A distinct politics?

Prior to the formation of a political Islamist opposition, the role of religion at the level of state in Algeria was ambivalent. From independence onwards there was an official attitude to Islam that was marked by public deference but which in fact was one of careful control. Although the revolution of 1st November 1954 had been fought on a religious basis and was popularly referred to as a *jihad*, the inheritors of independent Algeria were not religious leaders but military men.³ Indeed this, as I will explain later in this chapter, was one of the key elements of the FIS' identity: it claimed to embody the essence of the revolution, which it argued had been eroded under FLN rule. In any case, the newly-independent state quickly made it clear that Islam was to be subordinate to political will and not the other way round. As the official state religion, Islam was effectively controlled by institutions such as the Ministry for Religious Affairs, which was responsible for setting and paying imams'

³ The proclamation of the revolution referred to 'la restauration de l'Etat algérien souverain, démocratique et social, dans le cadre des principes islamiques' ('Proclamation du Front de Libération Nationale, le 1er novembre 1954', reproduced in Mohammed Harbi (ed.), *Les Archives de la révolution algérienne* (Paris: Editions Jeune Afrique, 1981), pp. 101–3.

salaries as well as, crucially, overseeing the Friday sermons. We saw in Chapter I how this angered men like Cheikhs Soltani and Sahnoun, whose attitude to the state was combative. However, their opposition did not extend into the political sphere, and the FIS would never benefit from their leadership. Soltani died in 1984, and therefore missed the spectacular rise of the Islamist movement, and Sahnoun turned down the opportunity to join the FIS in 1989.⁴

Hugh Roberts has explained in detail the impact Sahnoun's decision not to join the FIS must have had on the party's methodology and ideology, arguing that two features of the party would have been significantly different under Sahnoun's leadership.⁵ The first is its popular appeal. Because Ben Badis and his disciples (of whom Sahnoun was one) targeted traditional offshoots of Islam, such as maraboutism, reformism effectively excluded the majority of the population, who were largely illiterate and did not therefore have access to the scriptural teachings of the reformist tradition. This, Roberts argues, would have meant that a FIS under the leadership of Sahnoun—or any *ulim* of his generation for that matter—would have been unable to mobilise popular support in the way the FIS did so spectacularly. The second point is that the reformist *ulama* had an ambivalent relationship with the FLN: they rallied behind it during and after the revolution, but resented the lack of autonomy they were allowed under the FLN's rule, feeling that they were in fact the true instigators of Algerian independence. Roberts suggests therefore that the FIS' tactic of claiming to be the heirs to the FLN's historic legacy would not have been adopted under more traditional reformist leadership. This is undoubtedly true, but I would argue that the *ulama* were not so distinct from the later Islamists in rejecting the FLN's claims of legitimacy. The FIS claimed to be the bearers of the Islamic

⁴ Al-Ahnaf et al., pp. 29–34.

⁵ Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', pp. 450–2.

essence of the revolution, as established at the time of Ben Badis and his disciples. As such, they were not trying to share in the legitimacy of the FLN but rather point out how the single party had squandered its right to that legitimacy. They did not dispute the legitimacy of the revolution or of the original FLN—after all, Abassi had been one of the few revolutionaries to have participated in hostilities on the night of 1 November 1954 and had been a member of the FLN until 1975⁶—but rather decried the wayward path adopted since independence. Rouadjia tells us that even as early as the 1970s, the Islamist movement was insisting that the revolution had been a victory for Islam and not politics:

Ils réfutent l'argument d'une victoire due à un combat politique. Selon eux, cet argument est destiné à escamoter « la force de l'islam, qui seul a permis de jeter la France dehors ». De sorte que les Oulémas, qui ont longtemps préparé la révolution dans les esprits avant de passer aux actes, ont été tout bonnement trahis, tandis que les fruits de leur *jihâd* étaient récoltés finalement par les mécréants.⁷

As I argued in Chapter I, the potential for change offered by the FIS was subtle but significant. This party represented an attempt, albeit uncertain and at times disorganised, to break new ground by harnessing the religious legacy left by the reformers, while at the same time engaging politically with the stagnating structures of governance under single-party rule. As such, it was a party of some balance: it was neither a zealous, radical group that rejected modern political processes, nor a profane and manipulative party that was willing to use Islam as a mere tool to reach power. This balance is reflected in the reformist legacy to which it owes so much. For Islamic reformism itself struck what might seem like an improbable balance between a return to scripture and modernist thought. Tariq Ramadan, in his review of the leading Islamic reformers, tells us of their:

⁶ Omar Carlier, 'De l'islamisme à l'islamisme : la thérapie politico-religieuse du FIS', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 126/32 (1992), pp. 185–219, p. 210.

⁷ Rouadjia, p. 147.

[V]olonté de retour aux sources (à l'exemple des salafî fondamentalistes et traditionalistes) liée à une exigence rationnelle (qui les apparente à des mu'tazilite modernistes) ; se nourrissant de la fibre patriotique (à l'image des nationalistes) tout en appelant à l'unité de l'islam (dans l'expression d'un panislamisme antinationaliste).⁸

This ambivalence is perhaps what makes the Islamist movement difficult to accept. My analysis of Roy and Addi in Chapter II outlines the kind of arguments one might employ to reject such a movement, but the reality is that its political success was legitimate, regardless of the uncertainties from which it suffered. Roberts highlights the continued ambivalence of post-independence Algeria: the state was modernist in its economic and political ambitions—not allowing independent religious thought, for example, to detract from its hegemony—but the nation was not modern in that public consciousness had not yet accepted key characteristics of modernity such as the separation of religion and politics or the distinction between the public and private domains.⁹ One of the potential roles the FIS could have played in power would have been to bridge this gap between the electorate's appetite for a public Islam and the state's need for modern political maturity. Of course, what it would or would not have done in power can only be the subject of speculation. Despite its success in the municipal elections of June 1990, it was never given real access to the key power structures of the state. Nonetheless, contrary to the common view that the FIS was retrograde and politically fickle, there is much evidence to suggest that even as early as the party's foundation it was in fact a canny political organisation and sought to safeguard the public role of Islam in a way that responded to popular demands while also addressing the political lacunae that had marked successive post-independence governments. Consider, for example, the fifteen-point

⁸ Ramadan, p. 52. For further information on the Mu'tazilites, see Sophia Vasalou, *Moral Agents and Their Deserts: The Character of Mu'tazilite Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁹ Hugh Roberts, 'The Algerian Bureaucracy', in Talad Asad and Roger Owen (eds), *Sociology of "Developing Societies": The Middle East* (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 95–114.

platform it presented to Chadli's presidency in April 1990.¹⁰ This document outlines mostly political ambitions, such as the dissolution of the National Assembly to make way for new elections, which would be run under the auspices of a new independent body. It also calls for reforms in security policies and the independence of the judiciary, as well as state-sanctioned violence and an end to the single-party monopoly over the media. It is only towards the end of this document that explicitly Islamic reforms are suggested, and these are worded in moderate language that might just as easily have been employed by any other political party with ambitions to govern in a country where there was strong support for public recognition of Islamic principles.

So did this early manifestation of the FIS' political positions reflect balance or uncertainty? One might be tempted to argue that from the very foundation of the party the FIS displayed a certain amount of balance, as its leadership was very much dual: the fiery and puritanical Belhadj on the one hand, and the older, more statesman-like Abassi on the other. This would be misguided, however. The early years of the FIS were necessarily marked by uncertainty: a structure was required to harness the increasing support for Islamism nationally, and this would have to speak to a diverse audience with as yet undeveloped views on policy and the exact application of political Islam. The bicephalous leadership of Belhadj and Abassi reflected this need to draw in as wide a level of support as possible. As Hugh Roberts commented: 'it appears that [the FIS'] leaders have been deliberately playing on several registers in order to accommodate several audiences, and are consciously sustaining an intelligent double-act'.¹¹ The uncertain future of Algerian Islamism

¹⁰ Details of this platform were published in *El Moudjahid* on 20–21 April 1990, and the full text can be found in al-Ahnaf et al., pp. 49–51.

¹¹ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, pp. 66–7.

around the time of the party's conception is also clear from the apparent disagreement among leading Islamists as to whom such a party would include and what it would set out to achieve.¹² And this uncertainty was to continue through the formative years of the FIS; as we will see, it was only in 1991, with the consolidation of the Djaz'ara branch at the head of the party, that the FIS began to adopt a balanced, unified and coherent stance, condemning violence, explicitly supporting democratic values, and advocating multi-party negotiations.

Section 1.2 – Islamist diversity

Before we look at this development, a word is necessary about the diverse views represented by the Islamist movement as a whole around the time that Algeria was taking its first steps towards political pluralism. First, it is important to remember that to conceive of an Algeria divided into Islamists and non-Islamists is misleading, as the majority of political and apolitical organisations of substance in Algeria have a broadly Islamic outlook. This is significant in terms of an open political perspective, such as developed in Chapter II. The FIS were an expression of existing political realities in Algeria, i.e., Islam had always been placed at the forefront of political expression (however insincerely), and did not therefore threaten the political model. In fact, what it threatened was the distribution of power and not the stability of politics or 'democracy'. It is also significant because there were parties formed under the 1989 constitution that were not Islamist as such but competed with the Islamic credentials of the FIS (e.g. *Mouvement pour la démocratie en Algérie* (MDA) and *El Oumma*).¹³ Then, within the Islamist movement, there were various divisions and

¹² Al-Ahnaf et al., pp. 29–34.

¹³ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 130. For further information on the internal divisions of the Islamist movement, see: Tahi, 'Algeria's Democratisation Process', pp. 214–7; Lyes Laribi, *L'Algérie des généraux* (Paris: Max Milo, 2007), pp. 74–80; and Amine Touati, *Algérie, les islamistes à l'assaut du pouvoir* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), pp. 69–74.

sub-divisions that reflected the challenge of altering the national political landscape. Many activists did not support the notion of political participation, considering it contrary to Islamic laws, and adopted a revolutionary stance towards the state. These were represented, for example, by the violent *Takfir wa Hijra*, and more generally by those militants who had returned from Afghanistan ('les Afghans').¹⁴ There were also those who felt Algeria did not need a political party to represent the Islamist movement and preferred to affiliate themselves with non-political groups such as Cheikh Sahnoun's *Rabitat al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya*. Significantly, however, as I have already highlighted, these groups could no longer compete with the dominance of the FIS once it became clear that the political path offered the most gains in terms of the Islamist agenda.

Within the FIS there were also divisions. Many of the party's original members disagreed in principle with political participation, but felt it could be used as a means to an end: in other words, elections could be fought by a party with a view to establishing an Islamic republic, but that party would have to be dissolved once this objective was reached.¹⁵ This was the stance of the Salafist branch of the FIS, which originally held a majority in the party's founding council (*Majlis al-Shura*) but later came to be dominated by the Djaz'ara (Algerianists)—crucially just ahead of the 1991 parliamentary elections. The prevailing interest of the Salafists was the international Sunni Islamist movement, defined by its relationship with the worldwide *umma* and largely supported by the Saudis. By contrast, the Djaz'ara 'took their bearings from the Algerian national context and were inclined to give priority to the search for allies in other Algerian political formations'.¹⁶ A

¹⁴ Ibid (Roberts; Laribi).

¹⁵ Laribi, p. 77.

¹⁶ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 131.

spokesperson for the FIS-in-exile, speaking in 1996, described the two branches as follows:

[L]es Salafistes souhaitent un retour aux traditions, c'est-à-dire la restauration du grand califat à travers tout le monde arabe ; ils prônent une révolution islamique internationale tandis que les Djaz'aristes veulent faire la révolution en Algérie avec les Algériens, ils sont nationalistes.¹⁷

As Amine Touati reminds us, any long-term assessment of the FIS must take into account the earlier affiliations of the party's members: the Salafists were in large part made up of former members of the disbanded *Mouvement islamique armé* (MIA), the violent resistance group established by Mustapha Bouyali in 1982.¹⁸ And we must also be aware that the later (post-1991) evolution of the party can be explained in part by the departure of many of these same founding members, who saw no alternative but to return to the *maquis* after the coup in January 1992, re-forming the MIA under Abdelkhader Chebouti, a former lieutenant who had fought with Bouyali.¹⁹

The Djaz'ara, on the other hand, were less prone to militant resistance and far more political in their outlook. Their background alone set them apart from their Salafist counterparts: Tahi refers to them as 'counter-elites' with a high level of education but frustrated by poor job prospects.²⁰ It is because the FIS came to be dominated by the Djaz'ara that the comparison between them and Smith's intelligentsia (Chapter I) is so pertinent. It was the impetus provided by the Djaz'ara that bridged the gap between 'vertical' nationhood and modern, political nationalism.

¹⁷ Ould Adda Abdelkrim cited in Patrick Denaud, *Algérie, le FIS : Sa direction parle...* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), p. 77.

¹⁸ Touati, p. 69; Gilles Kepel, 'Islamists versus the State in Egypt and Algeria', *Dædalus*, 124/3 (summer 1995), pp. 109–127, p. 122. For further information about violent resistance under Bouyali, see: Roberts, 'Radical Islamism and the Dilemma of Algerian Nationalism', pp. 580–2; Evans and Phillips, pp. 129–30; Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005), pp. 642–50.

¹⁹ Tahi, 'Algeria's Democratisation Process', p. 215.

²⁰ Ibid.

Their modern path more closely reflected the historic legacy they sought to valorise: these were the members of society who had followed the Arabisation path opened up by Boumediene, who had been intent on securing greater legitimacy via the forced dominance of the Arabic language and culture (at the expense of both Francophone and Berber identities).²¹ In reality, however, the market proved more powerful than policy, and the existing advantages of a French-based education continued to benefit those who had avoided the Arabisation programme (in many cases, the sons and daughters of military officers and senior FLN members), leaving thousands of Arabophone graduates unemployed. This reflected not only the bias of key sectors such as heavy industry and commerce towards European business links (and in particular the dominance of French and English), but also the strength of the foothold that the Francophone elite had in the public administration. This ‘archaic’ power structure was the focus of the Djaz’ara branch of Islamist opposition: ‘C’est sur les décombres de ce pouvoir [archaïque] qu’ils ont bâti leur contestation ; sur leur marginalisation sociale que cette jeunesse instruite et globalement arabisée a élaboré sa cohésion et renouvelé son idéologie’.²² And this ideological ‘cohesion’ began to draw support from within the regime, as represented by Islamist sympathisers in the FLN known as ‘barbéfélènes’ (bearded FLN members).²³ A further reflection of this natural sympathy between the Djaz’ara and certain elements within the FLN was the key strategy adopted by Abassi: to identify the FIS with the historic role of the FLN in the national revolution. But before we look in detail at the ambivalent links between the FIS (offering opposition yet continuity) and the FLN, I would like to explain the ways in which the Djaz’ara came to represent the main voice of the

²¹ See for example: ‘Boumediène et la décolonisation linguistique’, *El Watan*, 27 December 2008. See also Ruedy, pp. 224–8.

²² Touati, p.72.

²³ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 133.

party—and thereby made possible what I argue is the *balanced* political representation it might have offered to the Algerian electorate.

Section 1.3 – Rise of the Djaz'ara

As I have said, it was the Salafists who provided the impetus to create the FIS in 1989. It was they who guided the initial actions of the party, playing a ‘social and cultural’ role to tap into the heart of the Algerian electorate.²⁴ This was achieved in part via a network of FIS-run charitable associations, allowing the party to show up the shortcomings of the state (as in the aftermath of the 1989 earthquake) and mobilise massive popular support ahead of eventual elections. But the primary intentions of the party at that time are the subject of some debate: was the FIS primarily designed to convey the orthodox ideals of Islamism, thereby reforming society, or was its *raison d'être* to fight Algerian elections on the basis of Algerian political issues? An analysis of the party's behaviour reveals a steady progression towards increased politicisation and doctrinal flexibility, which ultimately allowed the Djaz'ara element to come to the fore. Hugh Roberts argues that by accepting to form a party under the 1989 constitution, the Islamist movement willingly subordinated the religious to the political, as the formation of a party was not an obligation but a free choice; in other words the movement could have continued to lead its opposition to the FLN regime via apolitical bodies such as Cheikh Sahnoun's *Rabitat al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya*.²⁵ This decision to move towards political power, he says, was a direct reversal of the movement's earlier stance that Islamic reform of society must precede any formal political involvement, and was a fundamental

²⁴ Samy Hadad, *Algérie : Autopsie d'une crise* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998), p. 16.

²⁵ Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 447.

choice that was reinforced by various other factors: the FIS' strategy, its leadership, its constituency and its discourse.²⁶

In terms of strategy, the FIS' political success owed much to the intense politicisation it brought to mosques around the country. By using these places of prayer to spread its political message, the party was able to reach a wide audience with great regularity (five times a day in some 10,000 mosques nationwide, including a longer session for Friday prayers).²⁷ Roberts raises an interesting point in relation to this strategy, arguing that the abuse by the FIS of the pulpit to spread a political message reflected the official tactics of the state, which, as I have pointed out, had attempted to create official channels for the expression of Islam: 'the old Islamist reproach of the state-appointed imams, that their sermons tended to substitute political apologetics for their proper content of guidance in matters of faith and morals, became increasingly applicable to the imams in the FIS-controlled mosques'.²⁸ One might wish to add a nuance to this view, however, which is that the Islamist imams were not seen in the same light as those working for the regime. Their superiority in terms of religious instruction, and the spiritual role they played with regard to public worshippers, were beyond question: 'Devant les imams intégristes, [les imams rétribués par les Affaires religieuses] font piètre figure ; ils ont honte de parler en leur présence, les évitent souvent et ne les abordent que contraints et forcés'.²⁹ It is nonetheless beyond doubt that their willingness to blend politics and preaching is a sign of the party's shift towards increased politicisation.

Similarly, in terms of leadership, the executive body that governed the party (*Majlis al-Shura*)—and was based on an Islamic concept of consultation (*shura*)—

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 447–60.

²⁷ Touati, p. 8.

²⁸ Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 452.

²⁹ Rouadjia, pp. 183–4.

was made subordinate to the party's two populist leaders, as revealed for example by Abassi's decision in May 1991 to call for a general strike despite opposition from the council.³⁰ Such charisma-based leadership is another clear sign that populist politics was the new preoccupation of the Islamist movement's leading force. Furthermore, of the two leaders it was Abassi, an educated professional with no formal religious training, who took precedence over the religious scholar and preacher, Belhadj.³¹ This preference for political maturity over and above passionate spirituality is perhaps the clearest indicator of the direction the FIS wished to take. And this was not without difficulty: as the party grew in strength, with the electoral success of 1990, so it grew in numbers and struggled to maintain its original political line. The arrival of new members meant the arrival of divergent views:

Lorsque le FIS s'est constitué, il s'est donné comme ligne fondamentale d'être un front regroupant des tendances modérées. Mais les événements se sont succédés très rapidement [...] ses rangs ont grossi trop vite, et les hommes qui chaque jour venaient le rejoindre apportaient avec eux leur force, mais aussi leurs divergences. Et la direction n'a eu ni le temps ni la possibilité de réviser ses programmes, de se restructurer autour de ses principes et de ses hommes, de préserver sa ligne politique initiale.³²

However, this difficulty was dealt with more or less decisively in July of 1991, when a conference was held to reshape the party leadership. This confirmed Abassi's authority by removing key figures of dissent such as Benazouz Zebda, Hachemi Sahnouni and Mohammed Kerrar.³³ It was clear at this crucial stage—months before the parliamentary elections—that the FIS was endeavouring to root out those elements that would serve as a hindrance to their definitive admittance into the political apparatus.

³⁰ *Le Monde*, 28 May 1991. For further analysis of this action, see Chapter III, Section 3.1.

³¹ Abassi was nominated party chairman and spokesperson by the *Majlis* on 10 May 1989 (Laribi, p. 78).

³² FIS spokesperson, Ould Adda Abdelkrim, cited in Denaud, pp. 62–3.

³³ See Willis, pp. 219–21; Denaud, pp. 52–5.

With regard to the party's constituency, it is widely recognised that it was the urban poor who provided the bulk of the FIS vote in both the 1990 and 1991 elections.³⁴ Roberts identifies this as an indication that the party had prioritised the popular vote over and above the Islamist movement's traditional base, 'the arabisant wing of the Algerian intelligentsia' and 'small- to medium-sized traders and entrepreneurs in the private sector of the economy'.³⁵ Seeking to garner support from a wider group of the electorate does not in itself represent a shift away from Islamic governance, but, as pointed out by Roberts and others, the party's decision to follow mainstream opinion during the first Gulf War removed any doubt about the party's populist intentions. When Iraq first invaded Kuwait in August 1990, the Arab states collectively condemned the act—officially at least. On the streets of Algeria and across most of the Arab world, however, there were massive demonstrations in support of the Iraqi people and in defiance of the allied intervention.³⁶ Seeing this, the FIS made a crucial decision: to go against its natural enmity towards a secular Ba'athist regime and to risk angering its financial backers in Saudi Arabia (whose hostility towards Saddam Hussein's anti-monarchist discourse was clear) by supporting the popular view of the allied invasion, i.e., that an Arab solution, rather than imperial interference, was needed. Indeed, it even sent several thousand young party activists to Iraq to offer their services to the Iraqi military;³⁷ they never had the opportunity to fight, but the FIS' intentions were to safeguard its wide constituency and stand out from the rest of the country's political parties, all of whom had adopted

³⁴ For a detailed analysis of both sets of election results, see: Jacques Fontaine, 'Les élections locales algériennes du 12 juin 1990 : approche statistique et géographique', *Maghreb-Machrek* 129, July–September 1990, pp. 124–40; and Jacques Fontaine, 'Les élections législatives algériennes : Résultats du premier tour', *Maghreb-Machrek* 135, January–March 1992, pp. 155–65.

³⁵ Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 453.

³⁶ Laribi, p. 90.

³⁷ Ibid. For detailed analysis of the impact of the Gulf crisis on the FIS and its relationship with the FLN, see Chapter 3 of Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*.

more or less hostile positions to the allied invasion.³⁸ Roberts interprets this strategy as a pivotal shift in favour of the Djaz'ara and seems to identify a clear dichotomy between populist politics and authentic Islamism:

[W]hat is clear is the extent to which the FIS was willing to put its Algerian constituency before its international links, and its popular character before its Islamist doctrines. In short, the crisis appeared to mark a major stage in the 'Algerianisation' of the FIS, and to confirm its doctrinal shallowness but also its populist militancy and political flexibility, and the extent to which, in all of these respects, it is heir to some of the traditions of the old wartime FLN.³⁹

That the party's strategy marked a preference for domestic over international concerns cannot be refuted, but the implication that one cannot be at once 'popular' and Islamist seems unfair. Islamist doctrine does not require loyalty to one's financial backers, and the position of the FIS was not to support a secular dictator, but rather to show solidarity with his people—fellow Arabs and, as the demonstrators in the streets of Algeria saw it, victims of imperial aggression. However, the *partial* comparison between the FLN and the FIS is accurate, and is a crucial factor in my view that the FIS did not represent radical change, but rather, as I argued in Chapter I, a significant yet subtle shift away from state hegemony. It needed to build on the legacy of the FLN in order to secure its popular base, but also needed to address the electorate's appetite for a truly public Islam. It needed to harness the energy of nationalism but in a way that invoked something more permanent than the success of the FLN. The FIS sought to exploit the tried-and-tested legitimacy of the revolution, a legitimacy that was already active in the imagination of the Algerian people, yet at the same time bring about a clear shift towards a new and more lasting political representation. This of course explains the links—both in word and in deed—between the FIS and the FLN. We have seen how, as the successors of the earlier

³⁸ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 72.

³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 73.

Badissian movement, the modern Islamists (and in particular the Djaz'ara)⁴⁰ never operated outside of a schema placing Islam and national unity at the same level. And this is precisely what the ALN had done in its fight for liberation. The problem for the post-independence FLN regime was that its exciting anti-French and Islamic glory was slowly replaced with corruption and failed governance; in order to trump this, any potential opposition needed to tap into that earlier glory, while at the same time presenting itself as something fresh:

La force de l'islamisme consiste à proposer une nouvelle rupture avec l'Etat actuel, en retrouvant les mots, le vocabulaire de l'ancienne fracture avec l'Etat colonial. Ils réactivent une mémoire politique selon un processus déjà mis en œuvre dans ce temps colonial : rupture avec un Etat considéré comme impie ou antireligieux ; rupture avec un islam officiel, institutionnel.⁴¹

Section 1.4 – FIS du FLN ?

There are several examples of how the FIS both reflected the FLN and even cooperated with it, but we must realise that the comparison has its limits. Roberts has argued that the FIS' choice of acronym was a clear indication that it saw itself as the next generation of the FLN, that it was selling itself as the progeny (*fils*) of the ruling party.⁴² There was indeed a clear intent on the part of the FIS to build on the FLN's legacy, but I would argue that the desire for rupture was nonetheless strong. The Islamist party's secrecy, it has been said, mirrored the behaviour of the FLN during the revolution. *Le Monde* commented that the decision not to commit its programme to writing reflected the tactics of the wartime FLN, and that 'Il est aussi difficile de percer les secrets de la vie intérieure du FIS qu'il pouvait l'être de deviner ceux du

⁴⁰ Jean-Jacques Lavenue, *Algérie : la démocratie interdite* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993), p. 166.

⁴¹ Benjamin Stora, *Histoire de l'Algérie depuis l'indépendance* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994), p. 92.

⁴² Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 97.

FLN à l'époque de la guerre de libération nationale'.⁴³ However, this secrecy was a product of the FIS' political opacity—necessary for the populist strategy it adopted—rather than its revolutionary status. In fact, the secrecy between 1982 and 1987 of Mustapha Bouyali's MIA, an altogether different organisation to the legalised FIS of 1989–1992, would make for a better comparison.

Another similarity often identified between the FLN and the FIS is both parties' use of a *populist* discourse. Lahouari Addi, for example, has argued that the FIS took over the populist discourse of the FLN with virtually no changes.⁴⁴ He points out that populism was a necessary feature of the struggle for independence and that in order to retain power the ruling party later continued its populist approach, addressing those sections of society with the least privileges. This mirrored the approach of the FIS, which not only adopted a discourse that would ensure wide appeal, but did so with the intention of appropriating a defunct FLN base. In this respect, the FIS did not wish to annihilate the FLN as such, but rather to breathe new life into it under a new name: 'Le FIS refuse l'échec du FLN, qu'il voudrait faire revivre sous une autre forme et dans de nouvelles conditions'.⁴⁵ This view is reinforced by comments made by Belhadj in the aftermath of the June 1990 elections, when he declared that the FIS victory did not constitute 'une claque au FLN mais à ceux qui ont trahi le FLN'.⁴⁶ This should be the focus of our analysis: not whether the individual policy stances of the FIS distinguished it radically from the FLN, but the ways in which it was attempting to redraw the boundaries of Algerian politics. Addi is clear that in terms of, for example, economic liberalisation, labour policies and the future role of

⁴³ *Le Monde*, 3 January 1992.

⁴⁴ Lahouari Addi, 'De la permanence du populisme algérien', *Peuples méditerranéens*, 52–53 (1990), pp. 37–46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁶ *Libération*, 16–17 June 1990.

science and technology, no great distinction can be found between the positions of the FLN and those adopted by the Islamist party. He also points out that the populist discourses of both parties contained the same vague promises and ‘verbal generosity’. Yet he draws our attention to one key distinction: the FIS’ form of populism was *moral* rather than political.⁴⁷ Because of the nature of state-driven nation-building in Algeria, Addi tells us that there was no role for the governed, no dialogue between those in authority and those subject to that authority. This, together with an absence of press freedom, meant that any opposition had to be voiced in the only other public space available—the mosque.

For me, this shift from a political to a moral form of populism is highly significant, as it reminds us of the very real ability of a religion-based entity such as the FIS to challenge the authority of the state on new territory, to create an alternative politics. And there can be no denying that this new territory proved politically viable, in light of the successive electoral victories enjoyed by the FIS. Addi seems to dismiss its significance, however. I argued in Chapter II that his appreciation of the modern state is limited to one that is interested only in individuals and has no regard for community interests. Similarly in relation to populism, he argues that by nature it is anti-democratic, as it presents a false vision of consensus and therefore blocks any attempt at acknowledging and reconciling social differences. While it is true that the FIS discourse emphasised unity and eschewed specific detail that might alienate potential followers, it is also true that this party successfully challenged the ruling FLN in free and fair elections.⁴⁸ It would seem unfair to deny them legitimacy on the basis that (1) their policies were similar and (2)

⁴⁷ Addi, ‘De la permanence du populisme algérien’, p. 38.

⁴⁸ Even if we accept reports of Islamist ‘monitoring’ of a few polling stations during the June 1990 elections, their victory was so emphatic that these reports do not really call into question the political dominance of the FIS (see *Le Monde/Libération*, 14 & 15 June 1990).

they misrepresented the electorate's unity, while at the same time they had managed to challenge the very core of modern Algeria, i.e., a once-legitimate state that had forgotten its pledges and abused its powers. By deploying a populist discourse akin to that of the FLN, the FIS may not have offered a radical alternative in terms of policy, but it marked a significant scission from a state which had placed limits on public Islamic activism. As Salwa Ismail has pointed out, the scope of politics need not be confined to government and state; political activism can also seek to redraw the norms of how the governed relate to their governors. And the invocation of morality is one clear way in which this is done: 'the pursuit of morality in the public sphere can give Islamists power vis-à-vis the state and society, in particular, the power to dictate the norm. [...] activism in the social sphere allows Islamists to consolidate power and to contest state power'.⁴⁹ Acting as it did, the FIS sought continuity (in terms of policy and the established—albeit lost—legitimacy of the revolution), but also rupture from the previously restricted modalities of political expression.

A further reflection of the FIS' links to the FLN is the level of cooperation it offered to the FLN's drive towards economic liberalisation, as promoted by Chadli under Mouloud Hamrouche and Abdelhamid Mehri.⁵⁰ There was no explicit endorsement of this policy, but neither was there any explicit opposition to it, perhaps surprising given that such liberalisation, at least in the short term, would make life difficult for the urban poor who supported the FIS so vigorously. The shift to a market-based economy would after all mean an end to subsidies for basic

⁴⁹ Salwa Ismail, 'The Paradox of Islamist Politics', *Middle East Report*, 221 (winter 2001), pp. 34–9, p. 36. See also Robert Malley, *The Call from Algeria: Third Worldism, Revolution and the Turn to Islam* (London: University of California Press, 1996), in particular Chapter 6, where Malley argues that the FIS found a new method of protest and therefore a new form of politics.

⁵⁰ See *Les Echos* and *Le Monde*, 14 June 1990.

commodities, and would also bring about unemployment in unprofitable state-run companies.⁵¹ But Chadli's economic policies also represented a reversal of Boumediene's 'socialist option', and as such were compatible with the hostile position of Islamism towards a national strategy that had been accompanied with an increasingly diminished role for Islam (not to mention the fact that socialism was held in suspicion for having developed in notoriously 'godless' parts of the world).

Section 2 – Strategic cooperation

There is more to the FIS' apparent acceptance of Chadli's liberalisation than its willingness to move on from Algeria's socialist era, however. It can be read as part of an overall strategy of cooperation that benefited both the FIS and Chadli and his supporters, very much to the detriment of those within the regime who opposed Chadli's authority. The reforms had begun long before the FIS came on the scene—under Abdelhamid Brahimi, Prime Minister from 1984 to 1988—but began to meet with significant resistance when Hamrouche published a new package of measures in the summer of 1988.⁵² This resistance came from the 'old guard' within the regime and threatened to undermine Chadli's presidency. Roberts argues that the only way for him to eliminate this threat was by outflanking his opponents and cutting off their support; this is a central claim underpinning his analysis of the creation of the FIS and its later success at the polls.⁵³ This could only be achieved by creating an ally that would tacitly support the reforms and at the same time rob any potential base for

⁵¹ For a full analysis of the shift towards economic liberalisation, see Chapter 4 of Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*.

⁵² Evans and Phillips, p. 140.

⁵³ All of Roberts' work following the events of October 1988 either alludes to or explicitly identifies a tacit understanding between the regime and the FIS. As well as the publications previously cited, see: Hugh Roberts, 'Algeria between Eradicators and Conciliators', *Middle East Report*, 189 (July–August 1994), pp. 24–7; Hugh Roberts, 'Algeria's Ruinous Impasse and the Honourable Way out', *International Affairs*, 71/2 (April 1995), pp. 247–67.

critique of the reforms from within the state structures. In other words, the old guard would be unable to engage successfully in a populist attack on the President's unpopular reforms if the main base for such populist tactics were already taken over by a party such as the FIS:

The Islamists were to be unleashed, legalised and encouraged to take over the populist constituency in Algerian politics, by employment of the most hair-raising rhetoric if need be, in order to deny access to this constituency to Chadli's nationalist-populist enemies within the FLN who were not necessarily opponents of sensible measures of reform as such but were certainly the political enemies of Chadli & Co. and of the Reformers' faction with which the President was now identified.⁵⁴

This fits in with the widely-held view that the move towards pluralism was a ploy designed to disrupt the channels of opposition within the political establishment. By allowing the emergence of new and diverse sources of opposition, Chadli could better deflect the challenges coming from within the politico-military regime. Tahi, for example, suggests this was a classic divide-and-rule strategy.⁵⁵ Mahfoud Bennoune, a historian and veteran of the independence war, offers a similar view, arguing that the President established a 'façade of democracy' in order to take attention away from his disastrous economic and social policies, and buy time by manipulating the different parties nationally and introducing a more complex party structure at the level of the FLN itself.⁵⁶ Even Ghazi Hidouci, Minister for the Economy under Chadli (1989–1991), describes Chadli's move towards pluralism as a tactic to maintain the 'dirigisme d'Etat': 'Dans son esprit, la démocratie n'est qu'un

⁵⁴ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 94.

⁵⁵ '[T]he democratic transition initiated in February 1989 was really not directed towards creating an alternative to the existing system, especially as the army had no intention of abandoning its role as guarantor, even if it had abandoned direct involvement in political affairs [...] The strategy chosen was to multiply the regime's political partners by allowing the creation of political parties whilst, at the same time, setting them against each other; in other words the age-old strategy of 'divide and rule'' (M. S. Tahi, 'Algeria's Presidential Elections: The Rejection of Compromise', *Journal of North African Studies*, 3/1 (1996), pp. 279–305, p. 283).

⁵⁶ 'An Interview with Mahfoud Bennoune: Algeria's Façade of Democracy', *Middle East Report*, 163 (March–April 1990), pp. 9–13.

instrument de stabilité politique [...] L'arbitrage en faveur de la nouvelle constitution et des réformes procède d'une démarche pragmatique, tactique'.⁵⁷ Furthermore, as well as sowing confusion and thereby undermining internal challenges, Chadli was also able to use his democratic 'overtures' to refresh his mandate. Within months of the riots, he had secured his role as Secretary General of the FLN, been re-elected as President and ushered in a new constitution. This despite earlier rumours that he would take retirement and leave his position open to other candidates.⁵⁸ Decidedly, Chadli had re-emerged, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of his own disastrously unpopular term in office.⁵⁹ Frédéric Volpi explains that the momentous nature of the October riots meant that a fresh post-event perspective was possible:

This breach in the symbolic order that constituted the foundational event of Algerian democracy made it possible to assign *a posteriori* new roles to each social and political actor. By putting forward the image of a leader who had ended the state-party system and introduced political liberalisation, Chadli re-invented himself as the maker of democratic Algeria.⁶⁰

The significance of a possible FIS–Chadli alliance cannot be under-estimated, as it is perhaps the clearest indicator that the FIS was at the heart of Algerian politics. This reinforces the view of Islamist groups, developed in Chapter II, as potential agents in shaping rather than necessarily undermining politics. Further details are required, however. Just what was the President's position going into the events of October 1988? And what can we say about the way in which his relationship with the FIS developed? And, more importantly, what does it tell us about the nature of the Islamist party?

⁵⁷ Ghazi Hidouci, *Algérie : La libération inachevée* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995), p. 173.

⁵⁸ Laribi, p. 73.

⁵⁹ '[L]e régime de Chadli renaît de ses cendres' (Hichem Aboud, *La Mafia des généraux* (Paris: JC Lattès, 2002), p. 135). *Libération* also reported that Chadli had regained some of the people's confidence with his promise of political reforms (14 October 1988).

⁶⁰ Frédéric Volpi, *Islam and Democracy: The Failure of Dialogue in Algeria* (London: Pluto, 2003), pp. 45–6.

Section 2.1 – Black October: manipulation but by whom?

One element of Black October that is often overlooked is that the preparations for political reform seem to have been made long before the outbreak of violence. Chadli himself insisted on this point in his address to the nation on 10 October, and continued to refute the view that his plans were a response to the riots, pointing out that he had already broached the idea of political reform in a speech as early as December 1987, and had actually removed the FLN's trusteeship in July of the same year.⁶¹ One apparent anomaly in the President's behaviour, however, is his (and the FLN's) specific attitude to multi-party politics. Asked about the details of the reforms, officials were extremely cautious in the aftermath of Chadli's 10 October speech, offering only vague assurances of greater fairness.⁶² Furthermore, a declaration made by the President on 23 October insists that any form of pluralism could not be applied to anyone looking to profit from 'superficial democracy' or displaying any 'demagogic excess'.⁶³ And the same speech included mostly references to ways in which the FLN—rather than the state as a whole—could be more democratic. Later, in a statement announcing the proposal for the new constitution, Chadli made no mention of multi-party politics, although this was clearly provided for in Article 40 and was perhaps the single most significant change being introduced.⁶⁴ He even explicitly expressed his doubts about the value of having several parties in Algeria at that time, but stressed that if the people wanted such

⁶¹ Agence France Presse (11 October 1988) and Algerian Domestic Service (26 November 1988). The newly appointed Prime Minister, Kasdi Merbah, also made the same claim (Algérie Presse Service, 30 November 1988).

⁶² See for example the responses given by the FLN representative in Paris, Ali Ammar, in an interview with French radio (Paris International Service, 12 October 1988).

⁶³ Algiers Television Service, 24 October 1988.

⁶⁴ Agence France Presse, 5 February 1989.

representation then they must be allowed it.⁶⁵ So was Chadli taking steps towards a pluralist Algeria against his own will, perhaps because, as Laribi suggests, there was worldwide momentum towards democratisation at that time?⁶⁶ I think not. It is perhaps true that the international pressure to democratise was a factor; the end of the Cold War implied a shift away from the external conditions of the defeated Eastern bloc, as reflected also in the President's drive from socialism towards economic liberalisation. However, it is more likely that Chadli's actions were part of the domestic in-fighting that was crippling the regime. Prior to October, the President had only been able to introduce minor reforms, as he was blocked by internal opposition: 'devant, depuis son accession au pouvoir, tenir compte de son opposition interne, le Président Chadli Bendjedid [n'a] probablement pu introduire qu'à doses homéopathiques des réformes encourageant un certain retour à l'initiative privée, à l'autonomie de l'entreprise et à l'ouverture du pays aux investisseurs étrangers'.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the circumstances in which the riots broke out are at least one indication that his position towards certain elements within the establishment was one of antagonism.

Although our knowledge of the specific motives of the actors involved in Black October must remain at the level of speculation, one thing is certain: when the violence did break out there was nothing spontaneous about it. Industrial action had preceded the unrest in many parts of the country, and most significantly, rumours

⁶⁵ This canny remark, made during a party speech at a Central Committee meeting, was emphasised as a personal viewpoint, intended no doubt to speak to the concerns of the old guard, who were wary of the imminent arrival of a 'multiplicity' of parties on the political scene, while at the same time voicing democratic concerns for those in favour of the reforms. See Algiers Television Service, 28 March 1989.

⁶⁶ 'L'Algérie ne pouvait pas rester en dehors de cette vague de changements qui déferlait presque sur toute la planète à la fin des années 1980' (Laribi, p. 65).

⁶⁷ Lavenue, p. 16.

were said to be circulating that the 5 October was a key date.⁶⁸ Laribi, in his account of the corrupt and military state of Algeria, emphasises Chadli's role in provoking the violence, highlighting a key speech the President made on 19 September, in which he tacitly provoked public dissent ('Je ne comprends pas quelqu'un qui va chez le boucher acheter de la viande, qui trouve le prix exorbitant et qui ne proteste pas').⁶⁹ This speech was a critical event in the build-up to Black October; in it Chadli highlighted many of the state's shortcomings and was accused of goading the people into expressing their anger. Later he explicitly rejected these claims, arguing on several occasions that he was simply facing up to his responsibilities. This line of argument had the advantage of portraying him as willing to hold his hands up and recognise his mistakes, while implying that others were not quite so inclined: 'I am responsible for all shortcomings in various reforms. I am responsible for them. To be clear before you I say: I shouldered responsibility at a time when, perhaps, there was not enough political responsibility'.⁷⁰

The other damning piece of evidence to suggest some level of state machination behind the riots is the widely reported absence of the security forces during the initial unrest:

Où étaient donc les forces de police ce mercredi ? Elles avaient reçu des instructions précises. Même les agents de la circulation avaient déserté les carrefours. Comme si tout était prévu, à défaut d'être orchestré. Qui avait donc pu, mardi soir, prévenir certains commerçants de la rue Didouche-Mourad, en leur conseillant de laisser leur rideau baissé le lendemain ?⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Libération*, 6 October 1988.

⁶⁹ President Chadli cited in Laribi, p. 68. Aboud offers a similar analysis.

⁷⁰ President Chadli in his address to delegates at the 6th FLN Congress on 27 November 1988 (Algiers Television Service, 28 November 1988, as translated by Foreign Broadcast Information Service).

⁷¹ *Le Monde*, 15 October 1988. See also reports from *Le Monde* and *Libération*, 6, 7, 8 & 9 October 1988. In his account of events, Ghazi Hidouci, Minister of the Economy from 1989 to 1991, also speaks of his surprise at the inaction of the police (p. 161).

This would appear highly unusual given that rumours had been circulating to suggest there would be trouble beginning on 5 October. And further reports showed that even once in place the security forces did not intervene immediately.⁷² When they finally did intervene, however, their response was brutal and resulted in further discredit. Crucially, Chadli was able to distance himself from this by bearing the flag of reform. Whether this proves that he had a hand in stoking the embers of dissent is unclear. At the time of the events, one of the more popular theories circulating was that it was Chadli's opponents who had encouraged the riots in an effort to discredit the head of state.⁷³ However, there is no evidence to support this, and the aftermath (Chadli's success at the party congress, his re-election as President and popular support for his constitutional reforms) made it clear in any case who emerged with the stronger hand. The most convincing theory about how and why the riots took place, therefore, is that popular anger was drummed up in order to bring about the conditions for sweeping changes under the initiative of the President, and at the same time discredit the traditional protectors of the people, the army. Even if it is untrue that Chadli knowingly engineered this scenario, then the least we can say is that he acted with remarkable political acuity by turning things to his favour, for it would appear that the rioters' anger was a very personal attack on the man himself. Reports suggest that there was direct mockery of the President, who was depicted as being hen-pecked by his wife and reproached for having treated his son to a lavish wedding.⁷⁴ Hugh Roberts also points out that the slogans being chanted in the street emphasised the contrast between Chadli's weakness and Boumediene's greatness, further highlighting the impressive recovery he made in the aftermath of October

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *Financial Times*, 25 October 1988; Lavenue, p. 17.

⁷⁴ *Financial Times*, 7 October 1988; Evans and Phillips, p. 103.

1988.⁷⁵ This recovery was only made possible, of course, by the attenuation of the power of his opponents within the party structures. And this was achieved primarily by ensuring successful opposition from outside the FLN, which required him to develop a relationship of tacit cooperation—mainly with the FIS.

Section 2.2 – Post-'88: concessionary politicking

We have seen that the early years were by no means uncompromised for the Islamist movement: the opportunity to enter the political scene required it to revise its position as primarily a *religious* critic of the body politic, and once the FIS had been established it had to grapple with internal divisions between doctrinal loyalty to the wider Islamist movement worldwide and the imperatives of domestic politics. But, in order to support the view of a politically legitimate FIS, let us now take a closer look at how the newly-created party related to the Chadli administration. It should first be stressed once again that the nature of this relationship can never be known with any certainty: the long-term (and changing) intentions of the protagonists belong to the realm of political intrigue typical of any functioning democracy. However, certain facts available to us suggest a level of cooperation that was anything but official or overt, but nonetheless tangible.

The legalisation of the FIS, first of all, is a clear indication that Chadli voluntarily opened the Algerian political scene to the arrival of the Islamists. Indeed, he was not compelled to do so even by the legal reforms he had himself initiated. Articles 2 & 3 of the law governing the formation of associations (5 July 1989) made it clear that political associations would only be legalised if they respected the democratic

⁷⁵ “Boumediene, ardja’ lina! / Hlima wellet tehkoun fina!” (“Boumediene, come back to us! / Halima [Chadli’s wife] has come to dominate us!”), as cited in Roberts, ‘From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition’, p. 459.

process, and Article 5 of the same legislation stated that parties based exclusively on religion were not allowed.⁷⁶ Furthermore, Article 40 of the 1989 constitution authorised only those political associations which did not threaten, among other things, fundamental freedoms or popular sovereignty. It would therefore have been very easy for President Chadli to refuse the FIS legal status on the basis that: its democratic credentials were questionable as its discourse questioned the legitimacy of popular sovereignty; its potential mandate was based exclusively on its religious qualities; its highly righteous discourse on morals (and in particular *mixité*) threatened basic liberties; and its stated aim was to form an Islamic Republic (and thereby undermine popular sovereignty). Each of these arguments could have been refuted (the FIS had not yet been allowed to reveal itself as undemocratic, its opposition to popular sovereignty could have been depicted as doctrinal rather than actual, it was not based exclusively on Islam as it had very real political ambition, and it had yet to threaten any liberties as laid out in the 1989 constitution), but the prerogative was Chadli's and it is clear that if he had wished to prevent the formation of the FIS he could have done so. He is cited by Burgat as saying that 'it is not conceivable to apply democracy to Communists and to deprive the current which preaches spiritual teaching'.⁷⁷ While this makes perfect sense politically (it would be difficult to sanction 'godless' communism while excluding Islamic politics in a country where Islam had always been treated with outward reverence by politicians), it does not offer a legal defence of the President's decision. The fact is, Chadli legalised the FIS because he desired its presence on the political stage.

⁷⁶ *Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire*, 27 (7 July 1989), pp. 604–607, available at <http://www.joradp.dz/> [last accessed 9 February 2010].

⁷⁷ François Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa* (Austin: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1997), p. 274.

This concessionary attitude continued for quite some time, allowing the party to implant itself in society in various ways. Soon after its recognition by the state, the FIS was able to show how it could supplant the official role of the state in meeting the people's needs. The earthquake in October 1989 provided a key opportunity for the FIS to operate what Robert Malley calls a 'political sidestep'.⁷⁸ This is possible where the 'basic organizational principle', i.e., the state's ability to run the country, is perceived as dysfunctional, and 'neglect by or frustration with official channels activates parallel ones located at either an infra- or suprapstate level'.⁷⁹ The most common example of such a sidestep is in fact apolitical—the black market economy. But when executed in the context of inadequate public services its message is acutely political: "the state has failed you, but never fear: there is an alternative". The FIS also sent out the same message in other ways: free medical aid, food and clothing, legal advice and school equipment, continually laying the groundwork for its future role in municipal governance and, it hoped, in parliament.⁸⁰ It even organised dozens of its members to clean the streets voluntarily in Algiers when a strike meant that public sanitation services were no longer available.⁸¹ What is most interesting about all this, however, is that the state did not interfere, but allowed its authority to be eroded. It would have been very easy, if not to instruct the FIS from providing these services (which politically would have been very damaging for the ruling party), then at least to make a public effort to trump the Islamists with state-sanctioned rival services. And there were other ways in which this tacit support for the FIS was evident.

⁷⁸ Malley, p. 200. See also *Le Monde*, 5 November 1989.

⁷⁹ Ibid (Malley).

⁸⁰ Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, pp. 91–4; Carlier, p. 208.

⁸¹ *Le Monde*, 16 June 1990.

Perhaps the most successful strategy of the Islamist movement in boosting its nationwide appeal was through its appropriation of the mosque as a religio-political base.⁸² This began long before the founding of the FIS and was a crucial factor in redrawing the relationship between religion and politics. As I have shown, a central characteristic of the Islamist movement was its disapproval of the state's monopoly over religious expression, and one of the aims in establishing 'free mosques' was to reassert the autonomy of the religious from the political. This was successful inasmuch as the imams who preached in these mosques were not bound by the state's guidelines and therefore benefited from greater intellectual (and theological) freedom. However, one might argue that it was unsuccessful in that mosques came to be used for overtly political purposes, particularly as the movement grew in strength, thereby infusing the religious with the political rather than ensuring its autonomy. But this argument depends on a refusal of the very essence of the Islamist project, which, while not a rejection of modernity as such, does reject the (modern?) requirement that the historic role of Islam (as the guiding force in private *and* public life, as the common bond for entire communities, and as the starting point for questions about what those communities feel is right or wrong in their society) be diminished to one that impacts only on matters of private faith. In other words, the fusion of the religious and political, as exemplified in the exploitation of mosques, was at the core of the Islamist project. Unlike the earlier reformers, whose activities were (officially) apolitical, as we saw in Chapter I, the modern Islamists overtly sought to redraw the political boundaries along religious lines. Their use of mosques may have been technically illegal, but the emerging political expression it enabled was, in my view, of such importance as to justify this transgression.

⁸² For analysis see Malley, pp. 240–42; Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, Ch. 4; and Rouadjia.

Furthermore, this tactic cannot be seen as unreasonable in a country which has consistently placed Islam at the heart of its national identity, even formalising its status in positive law. Not only do successive constitutions and charters state that Islam is the national religion, but a *Code de la nationalité* in 1963 made it clear that automatic citizenship was reserved for those belonging to the Muslim community, and one of the authors of this legislation described Islam as ‘le noyau sociologique de la nation algérienne’.⁸³ It is therefore a matter of *public* policy. Defending the right to use mosques to address such public political concerns, Abassi Madani asked: ‘If the mosques are not there for that, what purpose do they serve? [The mosque] is the place for all the acts of good, in which all the affairs of the Umma are treated. It is in the mosque that the Caliph was designated and pronounced his political discourses’.⁸⁴ Such an assumption might seem surprising to secular-minded Europeans, but the public attitude in Algeria towards places of worship is, comparatively, very militant, and the Islamists are not the only ones to subvert state policy in this regard. Rouadjia explains that as well as the ‘free’ mosques initiated by the emerging Islamist force, ‘popular’ mosques (‘mosquées du peuple’) were constructed around the country on vacant plots by local communities who sought to circumvent the ‘official’ Islam of the Ministry for Religious Affairs. The lengthy testimony he provides is a clear illustration of the willingness of large swathes of the population to flout regulations by building illegal structures, and more especially, their well-founded expectation that the state would never consider interfering with these faith-based missions: ‘Les autorités sont au pied du mur ; elles ne peuvent détruire un sanctuaire comme cela, à moins de le miner, ce qui déclencherait la

⁸³ J. Bendeddouche, as cited by Rouadjia, p. 6.

⁸⁴ Cited in Burgat, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa*, p. 90.

colère des fidèles'.⁸⁵ And yet, the fact that this rebellious attitude was a threat to the authority of the state cannot be denied. Chadli himself made a damning speech in 1986, when he accused the unofficial instigators of illegal mosques of demagoguery, anarchy and destruction, labelling them as 'pernicious' and accusing them of erroneous knowledge of Islam.⁸⁶ Despite this threat, it later became clear after the formation of the FIS that the Islamists were being allowed to use mosques across the country for highly effective party political purposes, further evidence of Chadli's accommodating attitude towards his ostensible opponents.

Other examples include the non-intervention of the state during the municipal elections of June 1990, when FIS members were reported to have 'monitored' polling stations in an effort to influence voters, and remarks by both parties that their members were encouraged to support the other party in constituencies where they had no candidate themselves.⁸⁷ It is apparent, therefore, that cooperation between the FLN and FIS was a political reality, but this should not in my view lead to the conclusion that the Islamists did not represent change or political renewal. Politics is at its best when parties compete on similar terrain, while at the same time distinguishing themselves through subtle but significant shifts. Both the FLN and the FIS relied on nationalism and Islam, that much is clear. But the popular Islam of the FIS stood in marked contrast to the state-sanctioned Islam of the ruling party. And the victory this gave the FIS in the municipal elections meant that Chadli's policy of cooperation was perhaps too successful. The party's new power in local government, combined with its combative position on the Gulf War, may have been enough for

⁸⁵ Cheikh Mohamed Salah Amed, one of the 'pioneers' of the people's mosques, cited by Rouadja, p. 83.

⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 191–2.

⁸⁷ See reports from *Libération* and *Le Monde*, 13 & 14 June 1990.

Chadli to reconsider his relationship with the Islamists. Whatever the cause, this relationship deteriorated in 1991.

Section 3 – An end to the cooperation

The climate of cooperation had continued through roughly the first year and a half of the FIS' existence, but took a clear turn towards hostility in March 1991, when the FLN-run parliament adopted new electoral legislation that would heavily penalise the FIS. By redrawing the constituency boundaries, and in particular allocating greater weight to small rural constituencies, the FLN sought to strengthen its traditional rural base and at the same time undermine the FIS' advantage in urban areas. The new law was voted in on 2 April 1991 and was followed on 23 May by Abassi's call for a general strike.⁸⁸ As I have said, this move was challenged by many members of the party's consultative council (*Majlis al-Shura*) and was a decisive test of Abassi's authority.⁸⁹ In the event, it proved his popularity: despite the fact that the strike never took off as such,⁹⁰ the months of May and June saw thousands of FIS supporters take to the streets in a significant show of strength. Touati explains that what interested Abassi was not so much to interrupt labour across Algeria, but to occupy the streets. This was not a strike as one might traditionally understand it (a group of workers seeking leverage in order to negotiate specific demands via a representative body such as a trade union); it was an act of political defiance: 'Le FIS n'est pas en grève [...] il s'agit bel et bien d'une action de désobéissance civile [...] il devient clair que

⁸⁸ Abderrahmane Moussaoui, 'La violence en Algérie : Des crimes et des châtements', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 150–152/38 (1998), pp. 245–69, p. 247. For a day-by-day account of the unrest in May and June 1991, see Touati, pp. 21–62.

⁸⁹ Jacques de Barrin, 'Les secrets du FIS', *Le Monde*, 3 January 1992; Willis, pp. 175–6.

⁹⁰ Volpi, *Islam and Democracy*, p. 50.

la priorité pour les islamistes n'est pas tant de paralyser les lieux de travail que d'occuper la rue'.⁹¹

This show of strength was crucial in order to challenge the treatment of the FIS by Chadli, who had so far refused to set a date for a presidential election, despite the FIS' emphatic victory at the municipal level almost twelve months earlier. This refusal was a mockery of the President's own earlier resolve to usher in a pluralist era. But Abassi had another motive: to set the FIS apart from the rest of the political establishment, which had failed to follow through on its threat to strike. This, Roberts argues, was a key FIS strategy: in order to maintain its monopoly over the expression of political opposition, Abassi had to take drastic action at this stage, particularly as credible alternatives were being offered both by former senior FLN cadres (Kasdi Merbah's MAJD and Ben Bella's MDA) and by more moderate Islamist parties (Mahfoud Nahnah's HAMAS and Cheikh Djaballah's MNI).⁹² The final advantage of this show of strength was that the FIS could shake off the stagnation of nearly a year in power, a year in which not much had changed (Chadli was still in power and there was no promise of a presidential election) and in which the party's municipal actors struggled to manage their budgets because of harsh state funding, presumably introduced to undermine the FIS in power.⁹³ By taking a hard-line stance on the electoral laws and the President's failure to call an election, therefore, Abassi was able to a) reinforce his authority within the party via support from the thousands of activists across the country, b) avoid a perceived weakening of the party via its 'normalisation', i.e., by being similar to other parties, and c)

⁹¹ Touati, p. 22.

⁹² Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 468. For information on the parties mentioned here, as well as the other political formations in Algeria at that time, see Lavenue, pp. 68–105. Further information is provided in Appendix 1.

⁹³ Volpi suggests that the Islamists were actually quite efficient in municipal governance, despite these measures (*Islam and Democracy*, p. 49).

regenerate momentum in the FIS' electoral strategy by attempting to move on from the diluted power of its municipal base. Furthermore, I would argue that the actions of the FIS at this crucial time are indicative of its political legitimacy, but this requires further analysis. We need therefore to ask: How did the state respond? And what was the nature of the party's 'désobéissance civile'?

Section 3.1 – La « grève générale »

On the morning of 4 June 1991, the security forces evacuated the *Place du 1er mai* in Algiers, which hundreds of FIS supporters were continuing to occupy. It is unclear just where this order came from: was it the initiative of the President or an independent move from the military? In his account of events leading up to the military intervention of January 1992, General Khaled Nezzar, who was appointed Minister of Defence in June 1991, speaks of how the military had been ordered by Chadli to intervene so as to 'réparer ses dégâts'.⁹⁴ Both Roberts and Volpi also report that the order did indeed come from the President,⁹⁵ but behind Nezzar's official line would appear to be a presumption that it was up to the military to take charge, that without its intervention Chadli's weak leadership would 'damage' the state. In this regard, Touati offers a convincing insight into the nature of relations between the Presidency and the military authorities at that time. He explains that then Prime Minister, Mouloud Hamrouche, who resigned on 5 June, did so because he had been circumvented by Nezzar, who was beginning to take on a strong role in events, largely because he resented the increased powers granted to Hamrouche under the revised constitution:

⁹⁴ Khaled Nezzar and Mohamed Maarfia, *Un Procès pour la vérité : l'armée algérienne face à la désinformation* (Algiers: ANEP, 2002), p. 71.

⁹⁵ Volpi, *Islam and Democracy*, p. 49; Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 469.

Entre le chef du gouvernement et le ministre de la Défense, le courant ne passe pas. Hamrouche concentre dans ses mains l'essentiel des prérogatives du Président, ce qui ne plaît pas à l'armée. En outre, en nommant pour la première fois depuis 1965 un ministre de la Défense, il entend visiblement domestiquer l'ANP.⁹⁶

At a meeting held on 2 June, Touati reports that Nezzar was the only one present to push for the military option, in particular by asking Chadli to decree a state of siege, while the others (FLN Secretary General, Abdelhamid Mehri, Chief of police, General Major Ghezaiel, Head of the Presidential cabinet, Larbi Belkheir, and political advisor, Aït Chaâlal) all recommended a political solution.⁹⁷ Ultimately the state of siege was granted for a period of four months, which allowed the intervention in the early hours of 4 June. Soon after this clash, relations broke down between the FIS and the authorities, despite (or perhaps because of) signs that the Islamists had emerged successful from their actions. On 7 June, two days after the resignation of Hamrouche, Abassi Madani was received by the new Prime Minister, Sid Ahmed Ghazali, in order to discuss amendments of the new electoral laws and dates for both parliamentary and presidential elections. Satisfied with the terms of this agreement, the leader of the FIS called an end to the 'strike'.⁹⁸ However, this satisfaction was perhaps precisely what troubled the military, who continued to take an aggressive line in dealing with the Islamist opposition. Roberts suggests that a weakened FLN (with the reforms effectively defeated, the party would need time to rebuild a viable alternative to the FIS) meant the FIS was perceived in military circles as an even greater threat, and also that the show of strength represented by the public demonstrations needed to be negated by a reassertion of the state's authority.⁹⁹

In any case, the security forces began to arrest violent militants associated with the

⁹⁶ Touati, pp. 50–1. Note: Algeria had only ever had one Minister for Defence, Houari Boumediene, who plotted a coup against Ben Bella in 1965. Between 1965 and the nomination of Khaled Nezzar, the President had occupied this post.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 51.

⁹⁸ Lavenue, p. 253.

⁹⁹ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, Ch. 3 (in particular pp. 73–8).

wider Islamist movement, a move that was not resisted by the FIS' political leaders,¹⁰⁰ and then proceeded to undermine the authority of the party at a municipal level, replacing Islamist posters in FIS-run town halls with FLN posters.¹⁰¹ This clampdown culminated in the arrests of the FIS' two leaders, Abassi and Belhadj, along with several hundred party activists, on the 30 June, leaving the FIS to reorganise itself and devise a strategy for the December elections.¹⁰² But was this treatment justified? How had the FIS behaved during the months of May and June? What was the nature of its public demonstrations?

In the immediate aftermath of Abassi's call for peaceful action on 23 May,¹⁰³ he had been in contact with Hamrouche and his representatives in order to discuss how and where the demonstrations would take place.¹⁰⁴ Then, as events unfolded, communication was maintained with the President. On 2 June a meeting between Chadli and Abassi was scheduled to take place late in the evening, but the President made a televised address in which he referred disparagingly to the activists ('quelques éléments perturbateurs') and announced the beginning of the electoral campaign. This angered Abassi, who resented being belittled and argued that the opposition had not had time to prepare for the beginning of the campaign. He called off the meeting.¹⁰⁵ The next day, however, the President of the National Assembly was in contact with the FIS leaders, who were willing to negotiate the end of the demonstrations in return for a modification of the electoral laws and an announcement confirming the date for the presidential elections. The President

¹⁰⁰ Reuters, 10 June 1991; Willis, p. 207.

¹⁰¹ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 76.

¹⁰² *Le Monde*, 2 July 1991.

¹⁰³ 'Manifestez en paix et sans violence, faites preuve d'une discipline exemplaire et d'une solidarité sans égoïsme' (Extract from Abassi's 'Appel au peuple algérien', reproduced in Appendix 9 of *Le FIS du peuple : Politique, droit et prison en Algérie* (Algiers: Front islamique du salut, 2003)).

¹⁰⁴ Roberts, 'From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition', p. 469; Willis, p. 178.

¹⁰⁵ Touati, p. 51.

agreed.¹⁰⁶ Was this a step too far for Nezzar and his men? Is this what led them to intervene on the morning of 4 June? Perhaps, but whether legal or illegal, the order to evacuate the activists from public squares in Algiers would appear to have been unnecessarily heavy-handed. The demonstrations had up to that point taken place in peaceful conditions, with the exception of some aggressive behaviour on the part of non-FIS militants, in particular from *Takfir wa Hijra*.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, during a public meeting on 24 May, Abassi had specifically asked activists to respect public order and demonstrate peacefully.¹⁰⁸ And on the night the security forces intervened, it is reported that the ‘grévistes’ were actually asleep.¹⁰⁹ It would perhaps be naive to imagine that the security forces met with nothing but passivity when they intervened, but it would seem to me that any judgement of principle in this case should relate more to why the intervention occurred in the first place. In other words, did the behaviour of the FIS and its supporters exceed the norms of public protest? Addi argued at the time that the ‘strike’ was a menace to public order and appeared to justify the military intervention:

[L]a faiblesse de la présidence et le laxisme du gouvernement avaient permis au FIS de troubler impunément l’ordre public, de défier l’autorité de l’Etat et de fouler aux pieds les symboles de la République. L’armée est donc intervenue pour marquer les limites à ne pas franchir sans pour autant remettre en cause la marche vers la démocratie.¹¹⁰

It is perhaps a bit too easy to refute Addi’s view now, knowing that the army intervened in January 1992 and most definitely did undermine the ‘march towards democracy’. But it nonetheless seems surprising that mostly peaceful protests should require the army to ‘set the limits’ of what is and is not allowed. One suspects that

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 55.

¹⁰⁷ Willis, p. 206.

¹⁰⁸ Lavenue, p. 252.

¹⁰⁹ Roberts, ‘From Radical Mission to Equivocal Ambition’, p. 469; Touati, p. 54; *Le Monde*, 11 June 1991.

¹¹⁰ Lahouari Addi, ‘Pouvoir usé, économie en lambeaux : l’armée au secours de la démocratie en Algérie ?’, *Le Monde diplomatique*, August 1991.

because the FIS did not represent the kind of potential government that Addi may have desired, his judgement (as a democrat) of what should be tolerated was clouded. Similarly, Omar Carlier depicts the strike of 1991 as violent and subversive, comparing it to the armed uprising of 1945 and para-military activism of the PPA (*Parti du peuple algérien*) under Messali Hadj, and mentioning in the same vein the *maquis* of Bouyali, all apparently comparable forms of resistance.¹¹¹ The comparison is grossly misleading: violence in 1945 between police and PPA activists resulted in hundreds of deaths, including 103 Europeans who had been targeted by militants.¹¹² Perhaps comparable was the heavy-handed approach of the police, who clamped down on demonstrators protesting against ‘fascism and colonialism’,¹¹³ but this in no way places the FIS’ 1991 demonstrations in the same category. As for the comparison with Bouyali, this is entirely unjustified for at least two reasons: Bouyali’s organisation in the 1980s had no legal status and was clearly not a political party (and certainly not one that had been elected to represent a substantial majority of the country’s municipalities); and the MIA that emerged post-1992 was formed by FIS dissidents and other radicals who had abandoned the political solution favoured by the party’s council and so in no way reflected the political (albeit populist) impetus of May/June 1991. I am much more inclined to follow Hugh Roberts’ assessment; he argues that in its conflict with the state in the spring of 1991, the FIS did not display any insurrectional behaviour and that in staging peaceful protests against unfair electoral laws the party ‘was upholding the principle of fair elections, the *sine qua non* of democracy’.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Carlier, p. 215.

¹¹² Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830–2000: A Short History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 21–2.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Roberts, *The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 78.

Section 3.2 – Post-January '92: Islamist violence but from where?

This brings us up to the crucial event in modern Algeria—the cancellation by the military of the second round of elections in January 1992. At this juncture, I would like to focus on how the FIS evolved in the aftermath of this move. Although its significance as a contemporary political force has been eroded almost completely (the army's intervention was ultimately a success, in that its opponents in the FIS were reduced to a negligible force and successive governments resisted calls for the party's reinstatement),¹¹⁵ the party's continued commitment to political solutions is further proof of the regime's deplorable record.

In the absence of its cadres (Abassi and Belhadj, but also Abdelkader Hachani, who had led the party into the December elections, and Mohammed Saïd, who went into hiding after the coup, as well as hundreds of political representatives),¹¹⁶ the party struggled to maintain political coherence, as younger 'emirs' emerged to lead the violent radicals who saw no option but to abandon the constitutional path: 'Au lendemain de sa dissolution, notre parti n'avait pas le contrôle [des membres qui ont rejoint des groupes armés] ; il l'a encore moins eu lorsque ses cadres ont été arrêtés'.¹¹⁷ These men cannot be accurately compared to the political representatives who had built up the FIS' mandate: they were self-proclaimed leaders who lacked the cultural, political and religious knowledge of the party's historic leaders.¹¹⁸ However,

¹¹⁵ These calls have come from 'réconciliateurs' such as the *Front des forces socialistes* (FFS), the *Parti des travailleurs* (PT), the *Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'homme* (LADDH), and even sections of the FLN, not to mention those voices in Western academia and the press who condemn the party's dissolution and the repression that ensued.

¹¹⁶ By April 1992, 109 FIS representatives who had been elected in the December elections were in detention, together with 756 others who had taken office in the aftermath of the June elections (*Jeune Afrique*, 2 April 1992).

¹¹⁷ Abdelkrim Ghemati, 'A qui profite l'escalade dans l'horreur?', in *La Parole aux Algériens : violence et politique en Algérie*, special edition of *Confluences Méditerranée*, 25 (spring 1998), pp. 109–15, p. 112.

¹¹⁸ Bruno Etienne, 'L'islamisme comme idéologie et comme force politique', *Cités*, 14 (2003), pp. 45–55, p. 51; for a detailed analysis of the 'emir' phenomenon, see Martinez, *La Guerre civile en Algérie*.

the army's success does not of course mean that its role should be viewed positively: as I outline in Chapter IV, much suspicion about its actions remains—and indeed carries considerable credibility. It was (and still is) responsible for eliminating a political force which, while inexperienced, populist and at times simplistic and manipulative in its approach to political gain, had earned the right to represent its voters and had distanced itself from the violent fringes of the Islamist movement such as *Takfir wa Hijra*. And what is more, the FIS showed considerable maturity from January 1992 onwards, making increasing commitments to a democratic future for Algeria and a solution to the conflict based on dialogue and understanding. Cynics may argue that they were forced into a concessionary attitude, as they had been systematically dismantled by the regime and outflanked by more violent Islamist groups who became the real protagonists in the conflict. But this is speculative, as it assumes that the 'true' nature of the FIS was once again being concealed behind canny (and insincere) rhetoric; what we *can* do, however, is analyse what we know about the party post-January 1992. What did it support? What did it denounce? What actions did it take?

In 1992, as it became clear that violent resistance was coming primarily from groups like *Takfir wa Hijra*, the re-formed MIA and the nebulous group known as "les Afghans" (the *Groupes islamiques armés* (GIA) were yet to emerge), the role of the FIS in this resistance remained minimal. Some former members of the party are said to have developed close links with some of the rebels, but many of these were men who had been dismissed from the party's *Majlis* in July 1991 for their opposition to the nationalist and legalist line favoured by the Djaz'ara.¹¹⁹ Others did

¹¹⁹ Willis cites the examples of Said Mekhloufi and Kamededine Kherbane (p. 270), while Touati mentions two former FIS members who were also excluded from the council by the Djaz'ara and who

adopt close links with the violent resistance, but their relationship with the party's leadership suffered as a result. Two notable examples are Mohammed Saïd and Abderrahim Hocine. Saïd was a leading member of the Djaz'ara who, upon his release from prison in November 1991, helped Abdelkader Hachani convince party members that their participation in the December elections was essential.¹²⁰ After the coup in January, he went into hiding and was sentenced *in absentia* to ten years' imprisonment on 15 April.¹²¹ He then became involved in clandestine media operations to spread the Islamist message via publications and radio broadcasts that appeared to represent the MIA.¹²² However, the party's line on this association with violence was clear, and Saïd's media outlets were rejected as non-representative of the FIS' 'legality and public political action'.¹²³ Furthermore, Saïd's claim to speak in the name of the FIS was undermined by a message from Abassi Madani that had been smuggled out of prison. It endorsed Rabah Kebir as the party's sole spokesperson.¹²⁴ This position was reinforced the following year, when Saïd tried to form an alliance between the FIS and the GIA in May 1994. This failed because of the significant differences between the two groups, but was in any case rejected by the FIS' Executive Bureau, the party's recognised representative body.¹²⁵ Saïd was killed the next year by GIA fighters because of increasing disagreement over guerrilla tactics.¹²⁶

developed close links with the MIA: Hachemi Sahnouni and Benazouz Zebda (p. 169). See also Denaud, pp. 52–5.

¹²⁰ Touati, pp. 105–10.

¹²¹ Lavenue, p. 259.

¹²² Willis, p. 273; Touati, p. 193.

¹²³ Willis, p. 275. See also Abed Charef, *Algérie : le grand dérapage* (Paris: Editions de l'Aube, 1994), p. 385.

¹²⁴ Willis, p. 276.

¹²⁵ Volpi, *Islam and Democracy*, p. 88.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 89.

Abderrahim Hocine was a close ally of Abassi who joined the MIA in 1982 after his mentor's arrest. Arrested in 1987 after the regime's successful attack on Bouyali's network, Hocine spent less than three years in prison before benefiting from Chadli's amnesty.¹²⁷ He was welcomed into the FIS by Abassi, who nominated him to various positions of responsibility (assistant-director for the management and promotion of the municipal assemblies (APC – *Assemblées populaires communales*), and later administrative director of the *Syndicat islamique du travail*).¹²⁸ Following Abassi's second arrest in the aftermath of the general strike in the summer of 1991, Hocine became disillusioned with the FIS' legalist path and, as a former Bouyali militant, felt alienated from the Djaz'ara: 'les impondérables de la politique maintiennent à distance les anciens compagnons de Bouyali. La seule vraie famille de Abderrahim est en définitive celle-là'.¹²⁹ He left the party at that stage to rejoin the *maquis*, and was later involved in a series of bomb attacks on Algiers airport on 26 August 1992.¹³⁰ What is significant here is that it was only after leaving the political fold of the FIS that Hocine and others engaged in such acts of terrorism.

The involvement of several one-time associates of the FIS in violent resistance is of course a clear indication that the Islamists, generally speaking, represented extreme hostility to the state and, in many cases—both before and after January 1992—resorted to insurrection in order to see through their 'Islamic solution'. However, what I argue is that from the legalisation of the FIS onwards, there was always a current of political will within the movement to counter this violence, and that ultimately it was this current that dominated the party at the time of the aborted elections and continued to dominate the party's choices thereafter. For every

¹²⁷ The last remaining prisoners from Bouyali's network were freed on 29 July 1990 (Willis, p. 269).

¹²⁸ Touati, p. 193.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 192.

example of a FIS militant who took to arms, there is also a story of a split with the party at some stage. However, one potentially ambiguous development in terms of the party's relationship to violence was the formation in 1994 of its armed wing, the *Armée islamique du salut* or AIS.

It is impossible to know the nature of the resistance offered by this group, as its origins were multiple. Touati reports that a former FIS member, Saïd Mekhloufi, was asked in 1991 to form a military branch in support of the *Mouvement pour l'Etat islamique* (MEI), and that it was this branch that would later form the AIS.¹³¹ Willis reports that several other 'independent groups and groupings' joined forces with the MIA (the re-formed group that had operated under Bouyali in the 1980s) in 1994 to form the AIS.¹³² However, he also reports that the release (and, separately, escape) of hundreds of Islamist activists from prison during the first half of 1994 contributed to the formation of this 'army'.¹³³ Furthermore, the authority behind the AIS is unclear. Hocine Aït-Ahmed, leader of the *Front des forces socialistes* (FFS) and long-time advocate of the reinstatement of the FIS' legal status, felt that the creation of the AIS must have taken place outside the authority of Abassi and Belhadj and that in any case the group was too diverse and nebulous to play a significant role: 'Je ne sais pas si la création de l'AIS a procédé d'un travail rationnel, mais je ne le pense pas ; pour moi, les dirigeants du FIS ont été dépassés. Et maintenant on ne sait plus qui est qui au sein du FIS'.¹³⁴ But whatever the extent of the two leaders' control over the party's armed group, one thing is clear: they maintained a position that was open to dialogue with the regime and rejected the extremism of the GIA.

¹³¹ Touati, p. 183.

¹³² Willis, p. 327. Volpi provides the same account (*Islam and Democracy*, p. 71).

¹³³ Willis, p. 326.

¹³⁴ Hocine Aït-Ahmed, 'La politique d'éradication a échoué', in *La Parole aux Algériens*, p. 105.

Luis Martinez explains that the role of the AIS was to introduce some level of order to contrast with the ‘débordements’ of the GIA, which represented a grave threat to the credibility of the Islamist movement generally, but more especially to its desire for conditions that would be suitable for negotiations between the regime and the movement’s political representatives.¹³⁵ Willis provides a similar analysis: ‘Those in the FIS who continued to hope for a deal with the regime knew that the increasing strength of the GIA reduced the chances of such a deal being struck’.¹³⁶ The threat to such negotiations was, of course, the ongoing intensity of the violence. As I highlight in Chapter IV, it is this that strengthened the hand of the ‘eradicators’ within the regime (as we will see, this is the foundation for claims that the violence was deliberately exacerbated). Despite resistance from these eradicators, however, the FIS did manage to enter into negotiations with the regime on more than one occasion.

Section 3.3 – Attempted negotiations

1994 began in a climate of some hope, with Liamine Zeroual (about to be named Head of State) pushing for negotiations and the prospect of a ‘Conférence nationale de surveillance de la transition’ that would bring the various parties together, including the FIS.¹³⁷ In the event, this conference took place without the FIS, as the requirement to release the party’s two leaders proved too risky for the regime, and was boycotted by several other parties, including the FFS, FLN, MDA and RCD, who argued for the inclusion of the FIS.¹³⁸ Two events around the time of this failed conference were significant, however. The first was a meeting on 20 January

¹³⁵ Luis Martinez, ‘Le cheminement singulier de la violence islamiste en Algérie’, *Critique internationale*, 20 (July 2003), pp. 165–177, p. 169.

¹³⁶ Willis, p. 327.

¹³⁷ Charef, p. 491.

¹³⁸ Touati, p. 217; Charef, pp. 505–6.

between senior *ulama* and preachers close to the FIS at which they called for restraint while denouncing the regime's illegal seizure of power and the violence perpetrated by the armed groups: 'Il y a deux clans qui s'entretuent pour le pouvoir, un clan qui s'accroche au pouvoir et défend son droit d'y rester par la force, et un clan qui veut lui prendre le pouvoir par la force'.¹³⁹ In particular, their call to dialogue ('épuiser tous les arguments') and their refusal to endorse the killing of innocent civilians encouraged the *réconciliateurs* within the regime. The second was a secret meeting between the two FIS leaders and Zeroual, who actually went to the Blida prison where they were detained.¹⁴⁰ This overture ultimately led to nothing, as the protagonists argued over who should make the first step: should the leaders be released in an effort to end the violence or should their attempts to attenuate the violence be a precondition for their release?¹⁴¹ However, the encounter had set a precedent, and later in the year three more meetings were held between Abassi and Belhadj and government representatives.¹⁴² Once again these failed to reach any agreement, with Zeroual claiming there was insufficient cooperation and double-dealing on the part of the Islamist leaders.¹⁴³ However, the main point of contention was whether any negotiations could bypass the FIS' *Majlis*. Could the FIS move ahead on the basis of what Abassi and Belhadj expressed from their cells? Or could it only do so once the two leaders had met with their fellow council members, many of whom had gone underground and were considered 'terrorists' in the eyes of the regime? It is unclear who was to blame for this disappointment. Was it the case, as the *Financial Times* later argued, that 'too many people on both sides of the divide

¹³⁹ Cited in Charef, p. 508.

¹⁴⁰ See in particular Willis' comments that Zeroual was suited to this role as he was not perceived to be part of the same Francophone elite towards which the Islamists generally were so hostile (pp. 317–9).

¹⁴¹ Volpi, *Islam and Democracy*, p. 73; Touati, p. 220.

¹⁴² 15 & 29 September and 20 October 1994 (Willis, p. 337).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

[...] had no wish to see it succeed’?¹⁴⁴ Or had the President’s move been a ruse, as suggested by Touati?¹⁴⁵ It is more likely that the President was subjected to strong pressure from the eradicators within the regime to continue with an aggressive anti-terrorist strategy, just as the FIS leaders were under pressure not to appear too conciliatory towards an ‘impious’ regime. Roberts suggested at the time that the army could not countenance the idea of negotiations between Zeroual and members of the *maquis*, i.e., those former *Majlis* members who had gone underground, but that the real reason for their interruption of this positive process of dialogue was that they strongly opposed any steps towards the reinstatement of the FIS as a political party.¹⁴⁶ In any case, the potential for agreement had not been exhausted, and the momentum towards a solution was maintained by a key initiative involving all the main opposition parties: the Sant’Egidio platform.

Section 3.4 – Sant’Egidio: the definitive rejection of compromise

On 13 January 1995 the main opposition parties of Algeria signed a document that was intended as a framework for a solution to the crisis. This was the product of two rounds of talks held at the invitation of a Catholic community outside of Rome (Sant’Egidio), the first of which had been held on 21–22 November and the second on 8–13 January. The signatories represented the FFS and FLN, former President Ben Bella’s MDA, the PT, En-Nahda (Islamist party headed by Cheikh Abdallah Djaballah), the *Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l’homme* (LADDH), and, most importantly, the FIS. The regime refused to send a representative, criticising the initiative as an ‘attack on Algeria’s national sovereignty’.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, it

¹⁴⁴ *Financial Times*, 28 December 1994.

¹⁴⁵ ‘L’ouverture au dialogue [...] était en définitive un leurre’ (Touati, p. 234).

¹⁴⁶ Roberts, ‘Algeria’s Ruinous Impasse’, p. 258.

¹⁴⁷ Algiers Radio Service, 13 January 1995.

did its best to bury this significant development, arguing that the ideas expressed in Rome were more of the same and that the Islamists had managed to bring the other parties around to their position.¹⁴⁸ What is more, it would appear to have been largely successful in defusing the potential of the Rome platform. International responses were limited and little has been written in any detail about the significance of this move.¹⁴⁹ This is regrettable, for both the content and tone of the document represented a real step forward for Algerian politics generally, and for the FIS in particular.

The *Plateforme pour une solution politique et pacifique de la crise algérienne* (also referred to as the *Contrat national*) contains several sections: the principles underlying the agreement, the pre-negotiation requirements, and the return to peace, constitutionality and popular sovereignty.¹⁵⁰ It also begins with a preamble that raises several more general points, including the country's regrettable departure from the principles of 1 November 1954, the danger of introducing self-defence groups to the conflict, the regime's failure to enter into real dialogue, and the urgent need for negotiations as the only way to achieve a peaceful and democratic solution. The reference to 1954 is significant for at least three reasons. First, it reinforces the FIS' insistence that the FLN regime had not honoured the spirit of the revolution, and thereby attempts to validate the Islamists' exploitation of nationalist legitimacy. Second, the most salient feature of the 1954 declaration (the only cited extract, at least) is considered to be Article 1, which insists upon sovereignty and democracy within an Islamic framework ('la restauration de l'Etat algérien souverain

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Roberts provides some detail about diplomatic reactions to the initiative, notably from Paris, arguing that the timing and content of the French government's responses ultimately comforted the position of the eradicators and undermined the participants in Rome ('Algeria's Ruinous Impasse', pp. 262–5).

¹⁵⁰ The full text is provided in Appendix 2.

démocratique et social dans le cadre des principes de l'islam'). This is not so much an endorsement of the FIS's position as it is a reminder of the nature of mainstream Algerian politics: after all, this was a declaration made by the ALN, which in the form of the FLN went on to rule for 30 years and never missed an opportunity to invoke its continuing allegiance to this founding principle. And if there was any doubt that this was an expression of mainstream politics, one need only consider that the signatories of the Rome platform could not have been much more representative of the Algerian electorate: together they had won more than 82% of votes in the December 1991 elections.¹⁵¹ Third, it is of note that in signing this platform the FLN (represented by the party's Secretary General, Abdelhamid Mehri) recognised its failure in fulfilling the principles of 1954. It had finally evolved, one might say, from a party that sought to monopolise nationalism to one that shared the challenge of nationalist ideals with others.

The preamble was significant symbolically, but the substantive commitment to democracy is the key element of this platform. It is explicitly accepted in all its forms by all the signatories: a rejection of violence as a means to reach power (and violent dictatorship as a means to hold on to it); multi-party politics; human rights as enshrined under international law (including both individual and collective freedoms regardless of race, sex, language and, crucially, creed); the alternation of power via universal suffrage; the primacy of 'legitimate' (man-made) law; and the separation of powers (including a politically neutral army). This 'conversion to democratic principles'¹⁵² is highly significant in the evolution of the FIS, which had operated an ambiguous discourse regarding popular sovereignty, religious freedoms and women's rights. We can speculate about the reasons for this evolution (was it

¹⁵¹ Roberts, 'Algeria's Ruinous Impasse', p. 262.

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 260.

because the military had left them with no other option, were they making false commitments with a view to later establishing an undemocratic Islamic republic, or had they genuinely moderated their approach to politics?), but of course we can never be sure about their sincerity as they were denied the chance to govern. However, it should be clear by now that the party shifted quite steadily towards political cooperation and away from radicalism, as I have shown. What is more, their discourse from a position of increasing weakness post-Sant'Egidio continued in this vein. For now, though, let us continue to focus on the content and tone of this would-be ground-breaking agreement.

Having laid out their commitment to democracy, the parties went on to outline the steps towards a solution. Without listing each one, those of note include: the release of the FIS leaders and other political prisoners (nothing new, as the signatories had already called for this) and the party's reinstatement; the cessation of all extrajudicial acts, including torture; the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry; 'unambiguous' calls for an end to the violence on both sides; an end to the state of emergency (in place since the coup) and respect for the 1989 constitution; and the organisation of a national conference that would lead to free elections and greater press freedom. There is nothing in here that demanded too much of the regime. After all, the signatories had so much political muscle between them that all that was really required for it to work politically was for the military leaders to accept this framework and negotiate its implementation. The regime's explanation thus far for the continuing state of emergency was that security risks did not permit a return to normality, yet, as Roberts pointed out, it behaved with complete hypocrisy in rejecting the platform. It refused a clear opportunity to secure greater peace, and actually announced elections despite no improvement in security conditions:

[N]ot only has [the Algiers regime] dismissed the Rome platform's peace offer, but it is notionally intent on organising its own, unilateral, return to the electoral process [...] despite the fact that the violence and insecurity is worse than ever and no end is in sight. In this way, the essential hypocrisy in the army's position has been dragged out into the light of day.¹⁵³

Nor did the regime have any reason to oppose the initiative as something that was excessively hostile to the military. The tone of the final document was one of maturity and statesmanship. In the face of societal breakdown and despite considerable political heterogeneity, the parties present in Rome recognised the most pressing objectives: an end to the killings and a return to constitutional politics. The *Plateforme* was the first public accord reached between Islamists and non-Islamists in the Arab world.¹⁵⁴ This in itself was a worthy achievement, but perhaps most commendable is that the talks did not degenerate into an attack on the common enemy—the military leadership. It is very critical of the regime's failure to open meaningful dialogue and its unilateral approach to power ('politique du fait accompli'), but the final section assures it of 'mutual guarantees' in the event of negotiations, suggesting an intention of reconciliation and not recrimination. Furthermore, it supports the regime's insistence that the 'internationalisation' of the crisis was to be avoided at all costs, making the official reaction (that this was an 'attack on Algeria's national sovereignty') seem at odds with the reality of what was agreed upon. This epitomised the position of the eradicators: this was their battle and they resisted any interference—even when constructive and from within Algeria. Yet, by going it alone like this, they were in fact propagating the violent resistance from radicals: the main target of the insurgents was the authoritarianism of the state, and if this could have been moderated by the inclusion of mediators under the

¹⁵³ Hugh Roberts, 'The Islamists, the Democratic Opposition and the Search for a Political Solution in Algeria', *Review of African Political Economy*, 64/22 (June 1995), pp. 237–44, p. 243.

¹⁵⁴ 'Diminishing Possibilities in Algeria: Interview with Salima Ghezali', *Middle East Report*, 203 (spring 1997), pp. 41–3, p. 41.

framework of the Rome platform, then the capacity of the radicals to mobilise militants would have been greatly reduced.

The Sant'Egidio talks provide a good example of the FIS' political maturity and the regime's political inflexibility. They had the potential to push Algeria towards peace and genuine pluralism. They showed that there was no political impasse, but only military obduracy. And, from the point of view of this thesis, they marked an important step in the continuing evolution of the FIS towards acceptance of a truly pluralist, democratic and just politics. This proved to be almost academic, however. Abassi and Belhadj remained in prison and were only released on condition that they would stay out of politics, leaving the FIS' discourse confined to the fringes of Algerian political dissent.¹⁵⁵ For the benefit of this academic analysis, it is nonetheless worth noting that the party's position on democracy remained true to the spirit of the Sant'Egidio talks. There is no longer any ambiguity in its official relationship to democracy, a change that accompanied the transition from the disorganised but burgeoning movement of the late 1980s and early 1990s to the more limited but coherent party-in-exile of the conflict and post-conflict years. The executive body that represents the party outside of Algeria (*Instance exécutive du FIS à l'étranger* – IEFE) asserts its commitment to all the main elements of democracy:

Ce que nous voulons, c'est un président élu, un parlement élu, une justice indépendante, et des partis d'opposition libres. Nous voulons un pays où le peuple puisse choisir son projet de société par la voie des urnes, choisir ses représentants en toute liberté et dans le respect de la démocratie.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ A ministerial decision was taken on 17 July 1997 to move Abassi to in-house surveillance on condition that he exercise no 'activité politique ou partisane' (see Appendix 13 of *Le FIS du peuple*).

¹⁵⁶ Ghemati Abdelkrim, then Vice-Chairman of the IEFE, cited in Denaud, p. 69.

Such views are repeated across the spectrum of FIS publications and statements: emphasis is systematically placed on the importance of providing the people with a *choice* as to how best to model society; the ballot system is unequivocally invoked as the only option for effecting change in power; the independence of the judiciary is not compromised; and personal liberties are guaranteed.¹⁵⁷ That this political voice has now disappeared almost completely is testament to the success of the military campaign, which began after the cancelled elections in January 1992, but was a reality as early as the intervention of the armed forces during the FIS demonstrations of June 1991, when it would appear that Chadli's political authority was definitively sidestepped. My final chapter will examine the ways in which this campaign moved forward from the formal dissolution of the FIS in order to distort and thereby discredit the Islamist opposition.

¹⁵⁷ See for example: *Plateforme du FIS pour le Salut de l'Algérie* and *Statuts du FIS*, both adopted at the *Congrès du martyr Abdelkader Hachani*, 4 August 2002. Note: I originally located these documents on the official website of the FIS (www.fisweb.org) in 2008, but this site is no longer in use, a reflection of the party's ultimate demise. *Le FIS du peuple* contains recent essays in support of the party, as well as lengthy extracts from the two leaders' correspondence while in prison.

Chapter IV: Islamist Violence, State Violence and the Distortion of the FIS

*We rarely discover the truths of
history as understood by those who
have suffered its bitter reality [...] the
torture of Algeria at the hands of the
bearers of European civilisation has
been no exception to this shameful
rule – Noam Chomsky¹*

The aim of this chapter is to highlight some of the controversial claims made against the military regime, in order to show that this conflict may be understood as a means to undermine, denature and ultimately eliminate the political opposition represented by the FIS, as analysed in Chapter III. In the interest of balanced analysis, I will also provide some of the background information that might attenuate the credibility of such a reading. In Chapter I, we saw how the early development of the Algerian state might be read as having served the interests of the FLN rather than the nation as a whole. I argued that the ruling party was seen as having failed in its mission as its state-sanctioned nationalism and Islam were increasingly unsuccessful in appealing to the population. Here, we will see how this logic was brought to its most insidious extreme, as the private interests of the military leaders, with their stranglehold on political and economic power, were the driving force behind the conflict. Of course, they fought ostensibly in the name of democracy and the preservation of the state's integrity, but in reality democracy had not been threatened and it was they who destroyed the integrity of the state when they illegally appropriated the powers of the executive, judiciary and legislature. Their actions were also the most extreme expression of the *barriers to entry* that I raised in

¹ Noam Chomsky, in Youcef Bedjaoui, Abbas Aroua and Méziane Aït-Larbi (eds), *An Inquiry into the Algerian Massacres* (Geneva: Hoggar, 1999), p. xiii.

Chapter II. In an effort to eliminate in the long term the emerging political opposition, they sought to depict it in the most anti-democratic light. This distorted the reality of Algeria's political environment: the distinct political movement embodied by the FIS gave way to a chaotic and nebulous amalgam of Islamist 'terrorists'. And if the claims analysed in this chapter are to be accepted, much of the violence allegedly committed by these groups was in fact the work of the military.

The full extent of the debate on the culpability of Algeria's military authorities is difficult to ascertain for two principal reasons. First, many of the finer points of this debate are raised online in unofficial dialogue and as such have sources of varying reliability. The large number of forums where Algerian citizens express their fervent albeit uncertain assertions that there has been mass conspiracy between Islamist groups and the army does not always serve to make the debate more transparent. Furthermore, the comments found online are often threads from discussions that began elsewhere in a slightly different context; this means the factual insights they provide are limited. However, the blend of informal and more formally academic, political or journalistic analysis makes for fascinating reading, particularly when some of the key participants in this debate (those who have published books on the conflict, for example) respond to remarks made by casual bloggers. The second obstacle to transparency in this debate is the sheer scale of the allegations made by those who seek to inculcate the military authorities. The completely damning nature of the claims is such that there has been no cooperation whatever from the state. This, one assumes, is because even to entertain the possibility that these are credible would in itself call into question the ability of the state to continue to function: its all-important military apparatus would be irreparably undermined, many high-profile figures still in positions of authority would be publicly questioned, and the political

apparatus would also lose all credibility (although now pluralist, this apparatus is in fact completely dominated by pro-military parties, with the FLN and RND holding a majority of seats in parliament).²

Given these difficulties, we cannot hope to come to any sound conclusions about the exact culpability of the regime. However, by looking at the nature of allegations made and by explaining the context in which they arose, I hope to reinforce the view that the FIS were misrepresented and never allowed to develop politically. Chapter III developed this argument by examining the *political* context of post-1988 Algeria, emphasising the legality of the FIS and the obduracy of the military regime. As a complement to this political analysis, this final chapter will therefore focus on the *military* dimension of the conflict. As well as providing background references to the wider debate on the army's exact role, I will refer to five cases where accusations were made against the Algerian regime: the first is an account written by a former Second Lieutenant, Habib Souaïdia, who argues that widespread manipulation was used to discredit the Islamist opposition; the second is the assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf; the third is an account of a village massacre that took place in September 1997 and in which the army is accused by one of the villagers of having participated; the fourth relates to a defamation trial opposing Souaïdia and a senior Algerian General; and the final analysis is of the Algerian state's interaction with the UN Human Rights Committee.

² For a full breakdown of these seats, see http://www.apn-dz.org/legislature_6/french/parti_fr.php [last accessed 07 April 2010].

Section 1 – Souaïdia: La sale guerre

The 1990s and early 2000s saw the publication of several books and reports related to the civil conflict in Algeria.³ Some of these brought charges against the military for disinformation, torture, summary executions and the deliberate instrumentalisation of the growth of political Islam in order to ensure that the ANP (*Armée nationale populaire*) and its political allies remained the true driving force behind the country's governance. Habib Souaïdia's *La sale guerre* is probably the most high-profile of these publications—for several reasons.⁴ It sold more than 70,000 copies and was translated into seven languages; it was published in 2001, at a time when the horrors of the war had been seen across the globe; and it indirectly gave rise to a case for defamation between the author and the former Minister for Defence, General Khaled Nezzar.⁵

I will return to the details of this case a little later, as the trial proceedings are a valuable source of information about the role played by the Algerian army in the conflict of the 1990s. For now, however, it is necessary to understand the sheer scale of the claims made by Souaïdia's book. Unlike—although not in opposition to—the claims made by Luis Martinez, who as we have seen argues that the war was a kind of inevitable manifestation of the Algerian psyche or public perception of war ('imaginaire de la guerre'), Souaïdia goes much further to suggest that the military

³ As well as those publications already referred to, see for example: Moussa Aït-Embarek, *L'Algérie en murmure : un cahier sur la torture* (Geneva: Hoggar, 1996); Abdennour Ali Yahia, *Algérie, raison et déraison d'une guerre* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1996); Comité algérien des militants libres de la dignité humaine et des droits de l'homme, *Livre blanc sur la répression en Algérie (1991–1994)*, vol. I (Geneva: Hoggar, 1995), vol. II (1996); Djallal Malti, *La nouvelle guerre d'Algérie : dix clés pour comprendre* (Paris: La Découverte, 1999); Lucile Provost, *La seconde guerre d'Algérie : le quiproquo franco-algérien* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996).

⁴ Habib Souaïdia, *La sale guerre : Le témoignage d'un ancien officier des forces spéciales de l'armée algérienne, 1992–2000* (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

⁵ For the arguments on both sides of this dispute, see respectively: Habib Souaïdia, *Le Procès de « La sale guerre », Algérie : le général-major Khaled Nezzar contre le lieutenant Habib Souaïdia* (Paris: La Découverte, 2002); and Nezzar and Maarfia, *Un Procès pour la vérité*.

deliberately started and then propagated the war by massacring civilians and blaming the Islamist ‘terrorists’, the motive being to reinforce both the perceived threat of the Islamist rise and the concomitant need for protection by a state with a powerful military.

Souaïdia, who joined the forces in 1989, claims that preparations for the elimination of the Islamist ‘threat’ were well under way prior to the coup in January of 1992. Included in the 8,000 arrests of Islamist supporters in the summer of 1991 were the two FIS leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj.⁶ Souaïdia, who refers to their arrest as a ‘kidnapping’, cites the charge brought against them as the proclamation of *jihad* against Algeria, for which they were sentenced by a military court in Blida to twelve years’ imprisonment.⁷ Many of these arrests were justified by real attacks, such as that on the military base in Guemmar (November 1991), but there prevailed a sense that the regime was preparing for more than the immediate threats posed by such incidents. Guemmar, in the south-east of the country, was the location of a border post that was attacked by a small commando unit of Islamist militants led by Tayeb Al-Afghani.⁸ They managed to flee with significant arms and also killed three soldiers (Souaïdia says the real number of victims was closer to 20).⁹ General Nezzar did not hesitate to exploit the indirect links between this group and the FIS and ordered a vicious clampdown that killed 25 of its members. The

⁶ For a more detailed account of the figures cited for arrests during the summer of 1991, see *Le Monde*, 5 July 1991.

⁷ Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, p. 76. Hugh Roberts cites a different charge (‘armed conspiracy against the security of the state’) and points out that a call to *jihad* had not been made by the party leaders, who rather had reserved the right to take up arms if the military did not cease its intervention (*The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 76 and note 33, p. 80). Lavenue also reports that Abassi had threatened ‘holy war’ if the military repression did not stop within 48 hours, but that he was arrested before the expiry of this timeframe (p. 147).

⁸ Al-Afghani (his real name was Aissa Messaoudi) belonged to another group that had descended into violence, *Takfir wa Hijra*, having been ejected from the FIS at its conference in Batna in 1991; see Abder Rahmane Derradji, *A Concise History of Political Violence in Algeria, 1954–2000: Brothers in Faith, Enemies in Arms* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), p. 322.

⁹ Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, p. 79; Willis reports three deaths (p. 227).

Financial Times commented at the time that the scope of this operation was intended to stretch well beyond the incident itself and in reality targeted potential FIS supporters in the upcoming elections: ‘The incident comes at a convenient time for those wishing to scare people off supporting the FIS and underlines the army’s key role’.¹⁰ Around this time, Souaïdia says the regime began to adopt a particularly virulent discourse to counter the perceived threat (‘La société est gangrenée, il faut donc procéder à des amputations’)¹¹ and boosted military recruitment as if in preparation for war: ‘L’armée s’était lancée dans une campagne de recrutement sans précédent. Le type de conscription que des armées effectuent généralement à la veille de proclamer l’état de guerre’.¹²

Section 1.1 – Military designs on power

December of 1991 came and, despite an abstention of around 40%, the FIS won a majority of votes (48%) in the first round of elections and looked set to have an outright majority in parliament after the second round. Souaïdia tells us that the military generals, together with the regional leaders and historic figures of power (*caciques*) from the regime, immediately went into conclave to discuss what was to be done.¹³ Like many of his claims, this is difficult to confirm, although General Nezzar does describe a meeting organised in the wake of the elections that was attended by ‘les grands dignitaires de l’armée, les commandants des divisions de combat, une trentaine d’officiers en tout’, but not by the President himself.¹⁴ Does this amount to a conclave? And if so, does it imply that the attendees were acting inappropriately? Souaïdia does not explicitly say so, but much of the book relies on

¹⁰ *Financial Times*, 24 December 1991.

¹¹ Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, p. 77.

¹² Ibid, pp. 77–8.

¹³ Ibid, p. 83.

¹⁴ Nezzar, *Un Procès pour la vérité*, p. 69.

his powers of suggestion and the reader's corresponding powers of deduction. We can assume, however, that the decision-making at this stage was increasingly rooted in the senior military channels. General Nezzar is widely considered to have been the 'brains' behind the January coup.¹⁵ Also difficult to confirm is Souaïdia's contention that the fate of President Bendjedid was determined by blackmail. He contends that the authorities had information indicting Chadli's son in a case of misappropriation of funds (the 'Mouhouche affair') and were willing to hand over the file in return for the President's cooperation.¹⁶ He cites the involvement of several generals, including Khaled Nezzar. For his part, Nezzar has categorically denied that Chadli was in any way forced into resignation. While he makes it clear that he did not consider him a suitable President and suspected him of excessive sympathy towards the rising Islamist figures, General Nezzar suggests that the decision came from the man himself: 'il me dit [...] qu'il ne voyait pas d'autre issue que de « *confier encore une fois la situation à l'armée* »'.¹⁷

Further information is required to elucidate these events. What exactly opposed General Nezzar and the President? As I have suggested, the General felt that Chadli's stance in relation to the impending Islamist threat was overly tolerant, but more specifically resented the influence of Chadli's Prime Minister, Mouloud Hamrouche, whose 'attitude' ('le port du burnous, le cigare, les cours accélérés d'arabe')¹⁸ Nezzar held in suspicion. The General describes him as a conniving politician with only his own, short-term interests at heart, and depicts Chadli, meanwhile, as an impressionable and weak leader who succumbed to Hamrouche's designs on power.

¹⁵ Derradji refers to him as 'the true instigator of the January coup in 1992 and the original "coup maker"' (p. 403). See also Willis, p. 251.

¹⁶ Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, p. 84.

¹⁷ Nezzar, *Un Procès pour la vérité*, p. 71.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 59.

However, it was the military that had designs on power. Nezzar's tone suggests that he was impatient with the Presidency for not reacting harshly enough to the imminent gains in the Islamist camp. He writes of 'laxisme' on the part of the administration and suggests there were limits to what the army could and could not 'envisager'. His account of a private meeting with Chadli in the aftermath of the first round of elections describes how he feared that the President would wait until after the FIS had secured a majority before dissolving the National Assembly, a scenario that for Nezzar and his fellow officers was unthinkable and must be prevented by swifter action: 'Nous ne pouvions, nous militaires, envisager un seul instant qu'il prendrait le risque d'ordonner pour la troisième fois à l'armée de réparer ses dégâts'.¹⁹ The General and his fellow officers had therefore decided that intervention must come before, and not after, the second round of elections—before Chadli had the chance to cause any more 'damage'. They secured that possibility with the President's resignation, which Nezzar himself describes as 'l'élément matériel indispensable à l'arrêt du processus électoral' and which was made official when Chadli signed a letter that had been drafted by an army general, Mohamed Touati, and a lawyer, Ali Haroun, who had been nominated as the Minister for Human Rights under Hamrouche's successor, Sid Ahmed Ghozali.²⁰ Haroun's credibility in drafting this letter, however, must be considered tarnished by his later role in the *Haut comité d'Etat* (HCE), the emergency executive branch that replaced the government after Chadli's departure.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 71. This remark refers to two previous military interventions during Chadli's Presidency (once following Black October in 1988 and the other to remedy the 'manipulations hamrouchiennes', i.e., the FIS demonstrations of June 1991) and reveals the reluctance of the general to see the military taking a back seat while, as he saw it, the executive went astray.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 73.

²¹ Derradji, p. 317; Willis, p. 250.

While this cannot lead us to conclude definitively that Chadli did not resign of his own free will, nor can we accept Nezzar's word as sufficient to refute accusations of undue pressure from the army generals. What it does reveal at the very least is that the military wielded a degree of power that cannot place it completely beyond suspicion. Such will be my endeavour in examining the indictments against the Algerian military: it is impossible to confirm with any degree of certainty that they are true, but the alarming number and serious nature of the allegations made, together with suspicious circumstances and unsatisfying responses from army officials, will at least allow me to support the view that the conflict was not as portrayed by the military regime, and thereby develop the thesis that the fundamentals of the Islamist movement were denatured by the Algerian civil war. This does not imply that the fault lies on one side only; indeed, the tactics employed by some of the Islamist factions were beyond description. However, my focus is on the pivotal moment of the army's intervention in January 1992, and the ensuing descent into violence and shift away from democracy that ensured the political mandate of the FIS would be undermined to the point where a very blurred line was seen to separate the party's proponents from the radical guerrilla fighters in the conflict.

On 9 February 1992, the FIS was dissolved and a state of emergency was declared by the HCE.²² It was headed by Mohamed Boudiaf, one of the historic liberators of Algeria called back from exile in Morocco to lead the country back to stability. His status as a hero of the liberation may have been seen as a reliable means to reinforce the legitimacy of the state, but as Martin Evans and John Phillips suggest, the significance or appeal of this may have been lost on those from the younger generation who had been so instrumental in the angry backlash against the self-

²² Lavenue, p. 258.

interested elite: ‘Ignorant of the nuances of 1962, all they saw was a cynical ploy to drape the coup in the legitimacy of 1954’.²³ In any event, the establishment of this body allowed action to be taken with some officialdom, and detention camps were soon set up in the south of the country to house the increasing numbers of FIS activists and supporters who were arrested following the declared state of emergency.²⁴ Souaïdia tells us that this repression in the public sphere was accompanied even within the military by a clampdown on those seen as having sympathy for the Islamist cause. While some officers were arrested for their close ties with the FIS or other groups, others were attacked simply by virtue of their pious views and practices. This, Souaïdia says, was to worsen throughout the years of conflict, eventually resulting in the closure of mosques on military bases across the country, and military personnel being forced to conduct their prayers in secret:

Les purges déclenchées dès 1992 avaient créé dans l’armée un climat de défiance généralisée [...] Ceux qui, jadis, accomplissaient leurs devoirs religieux étaient montrés du doigt [...] On ne savait plus si les généraux voulaient combattre l’islamisme ou carrément l’islam, pourtant religion d’Etat.²⁵

One of the central claims made by Souaïdia is that the military regime contributed massively to the ‘production’ of terrorists, describing it as a machine for their fabrication. He explains that the early repression targeted civilians more than it did the armed groups, and that this served to build up a climate of hatred and resentment towards the security forces:

En fait, au cours de ces premiers mois de 1992, l’essentiel de la répression n’était pas dirigé contre les groupes armés, mais contre les civils [...] Plus tard je comprendrai que c’est à ce moment-là que s’est mise en marche la machine à fabriquer des terroristes. Ceux qui échappaient aux rafles n’avaient pas d’autre choix que de gagner les maquis.

²³ Evans and Phillips, p. 174.

²⁴ Willis reports that these contained 5,000 detainees according to the authorities and 30,000 according to the FIS (p. 257).

²⁵ Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, pp. 242–3.

Et deux ou trois ans plus tard, ceux qui avaient été arrêtés ont été relâchés : ils avaient tellement la rage de ce qu'ils ont subi que beaucoup d'entre eux ont pris les armes.²⁶

Indeed, he says that a similar effect was felt within the armed forces, where many young soldiers felt the same disgust at what they had seen and how they were treated, and as a result deserted from the military, while those who remained descended into a state of anarchy and debauchery. Souaïdia describes a military in which hygiene, order, protocol and discipline broke down completely. Assemblies were disregarded, uniforms were unkempt. Drug abuse was rife (Souaïdia estimates that 80% of troops indulged daily), with an illegal trade operating even within the military bases.²⁷ Perhaps even more grave is his claim that from March 1993 onwards, written orders for missions were abandoned in favour of verbal instruction, thereby making it extremely difficult to verify or dispute the claims made either in support or in condemnation of the army's actions during the conflict.²⁸ This reinforces one of the most common depictions of the 'dirty war', a conflict in which everything was flouted—rules, dignity, justice. One in which the legitimacy of both sides was eroded as valid opposition under a multi-party political system gave way to a bloody struggle with blurred boundaries.

Section 2 – Boudiaf and the search for legitimacy

The importance and complexity of the question of legitimacy in this conflict is illustrated by the assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf on 29 June 1992. I have suggested that Boudiaf might have been considered by the military as a good candidate for the job by virtue of his historic role in the liberation struggle.²⁹ The

²⁶ Ibid, p. 99.

²⁷ Ibid, pp. 250–53.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 318.

²⁹ Roberts describes him as 'the man of 1 November 1954' (*The Battlefield Algeria*, p. 134).

hypothesis here was that a ‘clean’ man such as Boudiaf could repair some of the damage the regime had done to itself by hijacking the electoral process, and also take back some of the mass popular appeal the FIS had so successfully generated. For the FIS had also sought legitimacy on the basis of its historic connections with the seminal struggle of 1954–1962. Abassi Madani was portrayed as a hero of the earlier conflict, therefore making his party a natural successor to the dominance of the FLN. Boudiaf, then, as Hugh Roberts puts it, provided the regime with the ‘trump card’ to entice back some of Abassi’s electoral base.³⁰ If this is true, then the decision to call on Boudiaf was entirely self-serving. Then, when his presence failed to serve the regime, it is generally believed the military—and not the Islamists—assassinated the new President.

Mohamed Boudiaf was killed by close-range gunfire while speaking before a meeting of young Algerians at the *Maison de la culture* in Annaba, in the east of the country. The attack was caught live on television and seen around the world. The authorities immediately arrested Second Lieutenant Lambarek Boumaarafi, a member of the infamous specialist unit, the GIS (*Groupe d’intervention spéciale*), who soon confessed to the murder. It was claimed that he was an Islamist acting on his own behalf. One of the first revelations to arouse suspicion was that this GIS unit was not supposed to be part of the President’s security cortège that day, and had been included at the last minute. Many observers have commented that the protocol was not observed that day. Souaïdia explains that presidential security was systematically handled by a different unit, known as the DSPP (*Direction de la sécurité et la protection présidentielle*), and that Boumaarafi had no place being so close to

³⁰ Ibid.

Boudiaf.³¹ Evans and Phillips report that three of the security agents present had left their post moments before the attack took place, and even that one of the other GIS agents on the scene shot and wounded the only police officer who was pursuing the assailant.³² While initial blame was placed in the fundamentalist camp, public opinion within Algeria showed that the military elite were not beyond suspicion: ‘the widespread conviction was that the assassination had actually been planned and facilitated by senior figures *within* the Algerian regime itself’.³³ Newspapers in the West reported how mourners at the funeral were heard shouting accusations that Boudiaf had been killed by the regime, or that Ghozali or Chadli had been behind the killing.³⁴ Whoever was behind it, the popular belief was that it was not the Islamists. Even Boudiaf’s widow felt certain they were not to blame and spoke of a ‘conspiracy’ at the burial.³⁵ What is more, in 1998 she requested that the death sentence passed against Boumaarafi be suspended and spoke to a Spanish newspaper of how her husband had foreseen the attack but had wished to go through with the Annaba trip regardless.³⁶ In time, the view that Boudiaf’s assassination was organised by the regime would come to be accepted in almost all quarters, to the extent that several years later, journalists outside Algeria no longer felt the need to speak in the language of allegations: ‘Military factions murdered President Mohamed Boudiaf in 1992 after he had ordered inquiries into corruption among senior officers’.³⁷ At an official level within Algeria, despite Boumaarafi’s admission of guilt (‘j’ai fait une opération de *djihad*’), a commission of inquiry could not reach

³¹ Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, p. 101.

³² Evans and Phillips, pp. 177–8.

³³ Willis, p. 263.

³⁴ *Financial Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, 2 July 1992.

³⁵ *El Pais*, 14 June 1998.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Observer*, 28 September 1997.

any satisfactory conclusion, but suggested that an ‘acte isolé’ on the part of the young officer was unlikely.³⁸

If we are to believe that Boudiaf was indeed assassinated by the same people who called upon him in Algeria’s hour of need, then we must establish *why* they would have benefited from such a move. One of the foremost claims is that his assassination was provoked by the rigorous attack he was preparing on corruption at the highest level of the state. While the regime benefited from Boudiaf’s presence as a well-respected civilian, thereby bridging the gap between the people and their rulers and lending greater legitimacy to what would otherwise have been seen as a putsch, this did not outweigh the risk of seeing high-profile officers and civil servants tried for misappropriation of funds and money laundering. A group of dissident officers in exile, the *Mouvement algérien des officiers libres* (MAOL), produced a damning report of Boudiaf’s death in which they provide remarkable detail of the decisions made on both sides of the internal feud.³⁹ They explain how a few weeks prior to his death, Boudiaf had entrusted one of his advisers, Colonel Mourad, with a mission to Paris in order to investigate what had become of monies that had disappeared from public coffers in suspicious circumstances. Specific names are given of those to be investigated, including some of the senior army generals at the time (Nezzar and Larbi Belkheir, Minister of the Interior under Ghozali). The French judicial authorities were not willing to breach the confidentiality of accounts held on French soil, but the MAOL reports that Mourad was nonetheless assassinated upon his return to Algeria. Like so many other suspicious murders during the conflict, this killing would later be ascribed to ‘terrorists’. The incident troubled Boudiaf greatly, and the MAOL report even claims that he chose to leave his presidential post and return to

³⁸ Touati, p. 176.

³⁹ See www.anp.org/affaireboudiaf/affaireboudiaf.html [last accessed 19 September 2008].

Morocco in the middle of the night, only to be later convinced to return by a select group of army generals.

Boudiaf's assault on corruption reveals an interesting subtlety in this affair: the protagonists on both sides had similar goals—the restoration of the trust of the people and greater legitimacy for a corrupt regime. Boudiaf was seen as an asset by the military regime for his credentials of honesty and legitimacy, but his own aim was to root out corruption within the very group of leaders who had brought him to power, thereby bringing legitimacy not to a group of generals but to the state itself: '[Boudiaf] savait pertinemment que le salut de l'Algérie ne pouvait venir qu'en montrant du doigt les vrais responsables du mal algérien afin de rétablir cette confiance perdue entre le peuple et ses gouverneurs'.⁴⁰ This made the president a nuisance to the authorities, and as one commentator reminds us, the Algerian regime had a long history of removing 'les gêneurs' and replacing them with others who would offer the least resistance.⁴¹ So it was with the country's first president, Ahmed Ben Bella, who was ousted in a bloodless coup when his senior military general, Houari Boumediene, felt his clan was under threat. And when Chadli was brought in to replace Boumediene in 1978, it was as a compromise candidate, perceived by the military leaders to be weak and acquiescent. Boudiaf's 'strategy of rupture' was at odds with the self-serving strategy of façade adopted by the military: 'Quelques mois lui auront suffi pour afficher une stratégie de rupture, alors que ses commanditaires l'avaient projeté sur le devant de la scène dans le seul but d'incarner une continuité de façade des institutions'.⁴² Therefore, while those from the military regime sought

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Provost, p. 57. For comprehensive examples of such repression, see also: Salah-Eddine Sidhoum, 'La Sécurité militaire au cœur du pouvoir : Quarante ans de répression impunie en Algérie, 1961–2001', available at http://www.algeria-watch.de/mrv/mrvrepr/repression_1962_2001.htm [last accessed 07 April 2010].

⁴² Provost, p. 59.

legitimacy for themselves, Boudiaf sought legitimacy for something wider—the very core of governance which had lost the support of its people. In fact, the effect of Boudiaf in office was to exceed the army's expectations: where they had hoped his revolutionary status would link him to their own glorious past, if anything it showed the extent to which their path had become wayward. As the *Financial Times* insightfully commented a few years after the president's death: 'Far from lending revolutionary lustre to the military-backed administration, Boudiaf highlighted how far it was from the ideals it claimed to represent'.⁴³ This is an illustration of the fine line the military regime sought to tread throughout the conflict—a fine line between generating its own legitimacy and avoiding scrutiny; a fine line between eroding the electoral base of the FIS and alienating the millions who had voted for the party; and a fine line between firmness in tackling the enemy and inadmissible war-time tactics.

Another clear effect of Boudiaf's violent death was to remind the people of the need for severity in ensuring law and order. By (ostensibly) showing what the fundamentalists were capable of, and on a stage that would ensure the bloody nature of the killing reached as wide an audience as possible, the army hoped to boost support nationwide and even internationally for its unforgiving tactics of repression. I have mentioned some of the accusations made by Souaïdia of the army's increasing intolerance of expressions of the Islamic faith (although never publicly: 'nous rigolions entre collègues en voyant les dignitaires du régime accomplir, les jours de fête religieuse, la prière à la grande mosquée d'Alger devant les caméras de la télévision'),⁴⁴ and also of the public repression (summary arrests and executions,

⁴³ *Financial Times*, 3 July 1997.

⁴⁴ Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, p. 243.

detention camps, torture, illegal interrogation tactics)⁴⁵ that accompanied the conflict. However, while this is damning enough in itself, the accusations made against the military go far beyond this claim; as we shall see, many parties have accused the military of *deliberately* feeding the terrorist supply chain, making Souaïdia's image of a 'machine à fabriquer des terroristes' all the more sombre and cynical. This chapter develops the view that the military, by virtue of their actions in the conflict, sought to deliberately denature the Islamist opposition. However, the claims and counter-claims to have emerged in recent years are practically impossible to support or refute with any degree of certainty, partly because many of them are based on second-hand accounts, partly because many of their authors cannot claim neutrality, and finally because of the tight control exercised by the Algerian regime over information relating to the conflict. Unable to *prove* that the military deliberately distorted its enemy, we must therefore seek to understand *why* it might have done so. What did it stand to gain from such a tactic?

Section 3 – Martinez on the *instrumentalisation* of violence

Although he does not offer as radical an assessment as Souaïdia of military tactics, Luis Martinez does suggest that the conflict was precipitated by the army. He says the authorities turned against their people in a deliberate effort to subjugate them into accepting an unfavourable economic and political status quo, or at least those sections of society that did not include either the civil or military bourgeoisie, or the non-state bourgeoisie (traders, industrialists and businessmen).⁴⁶ Rejecting the notion that the rise of the Islamist opposition can be explained by demographics (a

⁴⁵ For claims of this repression, see: Algeria-Watch et al., *Algérie, le livre noir* (Paris: La Découverte, 2003).

⁴⁶ Martinez, *La Guerre civile en Algérie*, p. 18.

rise in population from 11m in 1962 to 28m in 1990) or economic adversity alone, Martinez emphasises the key word that emerges again and again in analysis of the Algerian conflict—*instrumentalisation*. He suggests that the army used the threat of violence as a political instrument that would safeguard its role at the centre of power. In order for the common people to accept the increased upward mobility of those well-off members of society, they must be subjugated by attack, whereby their socio-economic concerns would be outweighed by more pressing concerns about imminent violence. This analysis, he says, challenges the view that the conflict resulted from the increased degradation, or ‘decomposition’, of the political system and allows us to view the civil war as a ‘ressource économique-politique’.⁴⁷ Such a strategy would have required a pretext in order to subjugate the potentially vociferous masses. The supposed threat of the FIS coming to power provided just such a pretext, he says: ‘la crise politique ouverte par l’interruption du processus électoral en janvier 1992 peut apparaître comme un alibi au retournement de l’armée « contre la société »’.⁴⁸

This view of the conflict might seem shocking to some; after all, the notion that an army would wittingly instigate a climate of such instability and violence in order to safeguard its ‘economico-political’ interests is quite radical. For this, Martinez develops his central thesis—what he calls the ‘imaginaire de la guerre’. He argues that the violent history of Algeria, with its many wars (struggles against the French during and at the beginning and end of colonisation; participation in two world wars; internal power struggles between the FLN and rival factions such as Messali Hadj’s MNA (*Mouvement national algérien*) in the aftermath of independence; and of course the conflict of the 1990s), has installed in certain sections of the population a

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 20.

tendency to associate violence with certain virtues, as well as social elevation and ultimately the acquisition of power.

Martinez's analysis is objectionable. First of all, this view depicts Algeria as a nation driven by bloodshed, although he is careful to dismiss this challenge: 'Contrairement au concept de culture de guerre, on ne postule pas a priori que la société algérienne est imprégnée d'un certain comportement politique (guerrier en l'occurrence)'.⁴⁹ But does he go far enough? After all, is a 'culture de guerre' so very different from an 'imaginaire de la guerre', particularly when he uses this 'imaginaire' to account for the changes in Algeria's power structures and the behaviour of large sections of the population, both surely reflections of the country's *culture*? Furthermore, one wonders whether his thesis does not underplay the ideologies at work in the conflict. For if we accept that personal elevation and wealth—the alleged fruits of war as perceived by the protagonists—are the motivating factors behind the actions of both *maquisards* and *militaires*, does this not imply that the conflict is vacuous and undermine the 'official' motivations (the quest for Islamic governance on the one hand and the protection of democracy on the other)? Need we remind ourselves that 48% of voters seemed to favour Islamic governance? Or, for that matter, that fears about Islamic governance were clearly expressed during mass demonstrations after the first round of elections?⁵⁰ This revealed a national division that no 'imaginaire' can explain away. We cannot discount the basic opposition between, on the one hand, a secular elite with its ties to the French language and culture, its considerable wealth and private interests, and its historic monopoly over the country's core power structures, and, on the other, a more populist, Arabophone movement offering grass-roots intervention in both the social

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 27.

⁵⁰ See reports from *Le Monde*, *Libération* and *Le Figaro*, 3, 4 & 5 January 1992.

and spiritual spheres and which historically had felt marginalised from governance. While Martinez' thesis may reflect the motivations of several protagonists, it is misguided to underplay this central division. Besides, it is reasonable to assume that the quest for power, riches and social elevation are common to all politicians and ideologues, albeit to varying degrees. A social democrat participating in the elections of any European state may well wish for an improved status as a corollary of his/her accession to the organs of power, but we cannot assume that the tenets underlying their politics are a mere veil.

Martinez also makes an assumption when he writes of the perceived virtues of violence and how they have taken hold in the public psyche following the various conflicts Algeria has known. He seems to attach these virtues to violence in general, rather than to the specific outcomes of the violence employed in each struggle. In the context of Algeria's many conflicts, perhaps what is in fact perceived as virtuous is the struggle against colonial oppression, against imported values, against terrorism, against the exploitation of Islam, against corruption, against apostates or against elitism, and not the use of violence *per se*. There is something condescending about the view that people are blind to the causes, emotions, values, stakes and ideologies of a given conflict, and perceive only the emergence of certain figures who have employed violent means to achieve social gains. To add to this blurring of the individual and very different incidents of violence in Algeria's past, Martinez contends that the *émirs* of the armed groups reflect the 'imaginaire' in that they are an extension of the 'bandit' characters of Algeria's past—the Barbary corsairs (pirates and mercenaries operating across North Africa during the Ottoman era), the colonial *caïds* (indigenous civil servants appointed by the French under colonial rule) and the ALN colonels of the liberation struggle. While a tenuous link may be

perceived between the earlier corsairs and the modern *émirs*, it is difficult to imagine how French-appointed civil servants could reflect the kind of violent role played by the leading figures in the armed factions of the 1990s. Furthermore, it is misleading to describe the nationalist leaders of the liberation struggle as ‘bandits’.⁵¹

One thing that does emerge from Martinez’ analysis, however, is the transformation that the Islamist movement underwent in the course of the conflict. He explains that in certain zones, the *émirs* were revered as leading entrepreneurial figures, particularly by disenfranchised youths who associated the Kalashnikov with social standing. Martinez makes it clear that the isolated communities in which the *émirs* held sway represented a break from the original Islamist resistance, with local power struggles replacing the nationwide efforts of the guerrilla fighters to topple the regime and establish an Islamic state.⁵² This example is indicative of the fractured nature of the ‘Islamist camp’ during the conflict: what had emerged as a relatively united, albeit uncertain, political alternative to FLN rule was broken down into discrete factions—often direct rivals, as in the case of the GIA and AIS, and whose actions no longer reflected the political impetus of 1990–1991. The subtle but significant shift I have alluded to in earlier chapters, as illustrated in the FIS’ new brand of nationalism or its politicisation of Islamic reformism, was therefore no longer recognisable in post-1992 Algeria, except where the remnants of the FIS continued to act towards a political solution, such as at Sant’Egidio. The question which concerns us here is the extent to which this breakdown was fuelled by the military and its various security enforcement bodies. They stand accused of adopting a dual strategy by which they sought brutally to eradicate the ‘terrorist’ opposition,

⁵¹ See Hugh Roberts, ‘Review: Algeria’s Veiled Drama’, *International Affairs*, 75/2 (April 1999), pp. 383–392, p. 388.

⁵² Martinez, *La Guerre civile en Algérie*, pp. 153–6.

but also to infiltrate it and propagate its violent tactics. I will now look at the details of accusations made against the state apparatus in relation to one particular incident, before considering the testimony and counter-claims provided by the military.

Section 4 – The dirty war in Bentalha

One incident in particular that has been the subject of wide interest is the massacre at Bentalha on the night of 22–23 September 1997, a year in which civilian losses reached record highs and international attention began to intensify.⁵³ Of the Algerian violence in the 1990s, this is perhaps the event that attracted the most attention from the outside world. It was widely reported in the international press and is said to have prompted the question as to who was doing the killing.⁵⁴ This encouraged French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy to visit Algeria and investigate for himself the credibility of claims that the regime was complicit in the killing of civilians.⁵⁵ His conclusions that there was no basis to such claims are extremely difficult to support, given that his short, government-sanctioned stay was entirely inadequate to get anywhere near the truth. Indeed, the causes of Lévy and Glucksmann were hardly served when General Nezzar commended the two men, who ‘par leur courage ont fait connaître la vérité’, and offered them his ‘plus grand respect’ and ‘plus haute

⁵³ In the days following the attack, calls came for the internationalisation of the Algerian crisis: on 23 September from François Hollande, then Secretary of the Parti Socialiste; on 24 September from Hervé de Charrette, then Foreign Minister; and also on 24 September from Jack Lang, then Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the National Assembly (see reports in *Le Monde* for these dates).

⁵⁴ In the aftermath of Bentalha, the leader of the *Parti des travailleurs* (PT), Louisa Hanoune, is reported to have been the first to ask: ‘Qui tue qui?’ (Saïd Zahraoui, *Entre l’horreur et l’espoir : 1990–1999, chronique de la nouvelle guerre d’Algérie* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2000), p. 223). Hugh Roberts also reports that it was the massacre at Bentalha that made doubts about the perpetrators a public concern (see Hugh Roberts, ‘Truths about the dirty war’, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 12 October 2001).

⁵⁵ Bernard-Henri Lévy, ‘Choses vues en Algérie’, *Le Monde*, 8 & 9 January 1998. A similar report was produced for the television by fellow philosopher, André Glucksmann: ‘Ce que j’ai vu en Algérie : Carnets de route d’André Glucksmann’, France 3, 6 March 1998.

considération'.⁵⁶ But Bentalha is most significant for another key publication that emerged in its aftermath and in which the army is accused of complicity: Nesroulah Yous, a resident of this small town just south of the capital, published an eye-witness account of events that has placed the blame squarely on the military—not just for its failure to intervene but for its direct role in the actual killings.⁵⁷ I have chosen to focus on this publication as it provides an excellent illustration of some of the complexities of the conflict, in relation to the identity of the attackers and the alleged collusion between guerrilla fighters and the security forces, and also in relation to the attitudes of the different protagonists towards one another. Furthermore, its high profile has led me to considerable peripheral material that heightens the significance of Yous' accusations and elucidates the context in which they were made.

It seems to me that broadly speaking two categories of claim can be identified in *Qui a tué à Bentalha ?*: those that are difficult to corroborate (comments overheard, second- and third-hand accounts, micro-incidents observed during the night of the massacre, etc.) and those that relate to observable facts (military action/inaction, large movements of people, public comments, etc.). The former are valuable inasmuch as they help to fill in some of the gaps and tie the 'narrative' together, and also add a human dimension to the already horrific nature of the account. As for those claims that should, in theory at least, be verifiable, their value is that they have provided the basis for further investigation, with numerous reports in the Western media, as well as from human rights organisations and the United Nations.⁵⁸ While it

⁵⁶ Cited by J.-P. Tuquoi in *Le Monde*, 20 February 1998.

⁵⁷ Nesroulah Yous, *Qui a tué à Bentalha ? Algérie, chronique d'un massacre annoncé* (Paris: La Découverte, 2000). Note: references in this chapter will be followed by the page number.

⁵⁸ For an example of press reports on Bentalha, see: 'Army heard killings, did nothing: Villagers suspect government's role' and 'Some question role of military in killings', *Boston Globe*, 2 & 4 November 1997; and Associated Press reports from 29 November 1997 and 8 January 1998. The reports from human rights organisations are referenced where relevant, and Algeria's interaction with the UN is examined in the final section of this chapter.

would not be practical to provide an exhaustive list of the claims made by Yous, it is necessary to detail a certain number of them—from both ‘categories’—if we are to appreciate the scale of the accusation and better understand the manner in which the events unfolded.

There were early signs, according to Yous, that the military were at best reluctant to help the villagers of Bentalha during the bloody and nervous period of late 1997. Arms had been requested from the local barracks in line with requests successfully made by other towns and villages felt to be at risk. However, Yous claims that these weapons were deliberately held back until after the massacre as a sinister ploy to achieve the dual aim of allowing the assailants to massacre civilians in what would be a highly mediatised event, thereby strengthening the state’s propaganda depicting the Islamists as demented killers, and of arming civilians whose sole purpose in the aftermath of the event would be to exact revenge on the nebulous entity responsible for the attack—the Islamists:

Ces armes qu’ils ont refusé de nous donner avant le massacre, ces armes qui nous auraient permis de résister aux égorgeurs et de sauver des vies, ils nous les donnent maintenant, quelques heures seulement après nous avoir fait massacrer à Bentalha ! À nous, qui n’avons plus qu’un seul désir : tuer. (p. 8)

Reading this citation closely, we can see that the claim goes beyond the failure of the military to respond to the needs of its civilians: the words ‘nous avoir fait massacrer’ are a clear indication that the military are being accused of actually orchestrating the killings, although perhaps not actually carrying them out. Several explicit claims later in Yous’ account confirm that the military are accused of complicity, although it remains unclear whether the assailants were Islamists who had simply been allowed to act with impunity, Islamists and military personnel acting together, or military personnel acting alone, disguised as Islamists, with the

aim of tarnishing the enemy in the eyes of the public and the international media. Whichever accusation the reader feels is being made, the testimony is damning.

Some of the more specific claims relating to the night of the actual massacre are equally alarming. While Yous and some of his neighbours were playing dominoes by a shop front, he says they overheard a comment from one of the military personnel patrolling the street to the effect that trouble was expected: ‘Ils sont en train de jouer, les chiens ! Ils ne savent pas ce qui les attend’ (p. 158). This marked the beginning of a series of incidents in which the security forces allegedly acted mysteriously. Their behaviour is described as ‘inhabituelle’ (p. 160) and their positions are said to have been close if not identical to those of the assailants: ‘Quelle n’est pas ma surprise quand je vois quatre ou cinq militaires en tenue de combat de camouflage clair [...] qui se déplacent du carrefour en direction des vergers’ (pp. 163–4).⁵⁹ This observation is made all the more mysterious by second-hand accounts of other figures observed around the orchards—not military personnel but civilian defence groups (*gardes communales*), at least in appearance. A total of three distinct groups are reported to have been seen entering the orchards prior to the killings, each with its own role to play: the first, Yous says, planted explosives at the entrances to some of the houses in order to gain access, while being covered by the second; the third was responsible for the ‘sale boulot’ (pp. 207–8). There is confusion, however, as to whether the assailants were from the military or the armed Islamic groups. Two hypotheses are put forward: either these men were Islamists disguised as military personnel so as not to arouse suspicion among the locals (we are told that at the time it was positively banal to see soldiers hiding in ambush), or they were military personnel participating in the killings. An unclear picture emerges, with Yous

⁵⁹ Yous explains that the orchards appeared to be the source of the assailants’ attack (p. 165).

admitting that no satisfactory explanation is likely ever to be found: ‘en réalité, on ne saisira jamais ce qui s’est passé parce que, pour un esprit sain, c’est tout simplement inconcevable’ (p. 208).

However, he does suggest that these two hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. Various elements lead him to believe that the group was not homogenous, but contained local Islamists as well as ‘death squadrons’ from the military. He says, for example, that he was surprised to hear some of the men speak with an accent that he recognised as coming from the east of the country. Later, he recounts how the blasphemous attitude and language of at least some of the assailants convinced him that they were military men. When some of the villagers shout to the attackers that they should be fighting with the military and not innocent civilians, the response is caustic:

« Les militaires ne viendront pas vous aider ! Nous avons toute la nuit pour violer vos femmes et vos enfants, boire votre sang. Même si vous arrivez à nous échapper aujourd’hui, nous reviendrons demain pour vous faire la fête. Nous sommes ici pour vous envoyer chez votre Dieu ! » (p. 170)

Your remarks:

Je suis à la fois offusqué, troublé et conforté dans mon sentiment qu’il y a quelque chose qui cloche chez ces individus. Je ne sais pas très bien qui sont ces monstres en face de nous. Je veux bien croire que ce sont les terroristes dont on nous rebat les oreilles, mais j’en doute de plus en plus. Et s’affermit en moi la conviction qu’il ne s’agit pas d’islamistes : il n’y a que les militaires pour blasphémer de la sorte. (p. 171)⁶⁰

The heterogeneity of the assailants was further evident in that many of the men had beards while others did not, and their clothes differed, with some even wearing

⁶⁰ It is worth noting that other commentators have alluded to the presence of armed groups who renounced God and appeared to act out of pure dementia, which might suggest that not only military personnel were capable of blasphemy during these troubled times. See: Appendix 2, p. 65 of Salima Mellah, ‘Comité justice pour l’Algérie : Les massacres en Algérie 1992–2004’, www.algerie-tpp.org/tpp/pdf/dossier_2_massacres.pdf [last accessed 21 April 2010].

the traditional Islamist *kachabia* over the dark blue combat gear associated with the *gardes communales*. Another striking revelation is that several of the inhabitants claim to have recognised three or four local Islamists among the group of killers, but this has in no way weakened their conviction that the military were behind the massacre. Yous explains this by arguing that local fighters may have been deliberately used in order to convince the villagers that the attack was indeed carried out by armed Islamic groups, and even that these same fighters would later be displayed in the media as the perpetrators of the crime (pp. 210–1). This question is also raised by a former Colonel with the Algerian army, Mohamed Samraoui. He claims that the deliberate use of recognisable Islamists was a ploy to take attention away from the military and further discredit the resistance:

Ainsi, pour démontrer que les massacres de civils sont bien le fait des islamistes, le DRS a mis au point une technique presque infaillible, consistant à inclure de vrais islamistes dans les groupes des forces combinées chargés de ces « opérations » (il s’agit d’individus préalablement arrêtés et « retournés » sous la torture ou « tenus » par des promesses de clémence pour des crimes commis antérieurement). Et lors des massacres, les habitants des premières maisons de la localité visée étaient volontairement épargnés, de manière à permettre aux survivants de témoigner ensuite qu’ils ont reconnu des islamistes.⁶¹

One symbol of Islamist involvement—real or otherwise—is the beard so often associated with more traditional or radical elements of society. Yous tells us repeatedly that he felt, on the night of the Bentalha massacre, that many of the assailants’ beards were false: ‘On me demandera plus tard ce qui m’a fait penser que ce n’étaient pas des islamistes. Je crois que certaines barbes et certains cheveux étaient artificiels’ (p. 169). A deserter from the military, in exile in the UK, also suggests that this was common. In an interview with *Libération* in October 1997,

⁶¹ Mohamed Samraoui, *Chronique des années de sang. Algérie : comment les services secrets ont manipulé les groupes islamistes* (Paris: Denoël, 2003), p. 22.

Omar (his real identity is not revealed) relates the story of a massacre committed by military personnel in the month of June of the same year. Several junior soldiers from his unit were allegedly called upon to wait on the outskirts of a small town while a group of around 25 of their colleagues proceeded to massacre some 30 innocent civilians. His description of their return, several hours later, is as follows:

Ils étaient grimés, avec des fausses barbes et sentant le musc comme des islamistes. Ils avaient gardé les pantalons de treillis mais ils avaient des T-shirts civils, ils ressemblaient vraiment à des islamistes typiques. Certains avaient du sang sur leurs pantalons et leurs couteaux de paras étaient aussi ensanglantés. Ils ont enlevé leurs barbes. On n'a rien demandé, on ne demande rien dans l'armée et je ne me suis pas posé de question.⁶²

For his part, Souaïdia alleges that the use of real beards to inculcate the 'tangos' was also common practice: 'je savais que quand les hommes du DRS se laissaient pousser la barbe, c'est qu'ils préparaient une « sale mission » où ils se feraient passer pour des tangos'.⁶³

Most of the accusations I have alluded to so far belong to the 'category' of claims that are difficult to corroborate. However damning they may be, it is difficult to interpret them as airtight evidence that the military were behind the killings. When they are taken together with some of the more irrefutable testimony, however, the case is strengthened. The single most damaging—and most widespread—claim about the Bentalha massacre is that the military were present in massive numbers but did not intervene. An Amnesty International report noted that many of the massacres took place in the most heavily militarised part of the country:

In many cases massacres, often lasting several hours, took place only a very short distance, a few kilometres or even a few hundred metres away from army and security forces barracks and outposts. However, in spite of the screams and cries for help of the

⁶² « Ils avaient de fausses barbes et du sang sur leurs pantalons », *Libération*, 23 October 1997.

⁶³ Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, p. 190.

victims, the sound of gunshots, and the flames and smoke of the burning houses, the security forces have not intervened – neither to come to the rescue of those who were being massacred, nor to arrest those responsible for the massacres, who got away on each occasion.⁶⁴

The appendices of Yous' testimony show detailed maps of the village and surrounding area. They reveal two military bases and one unit of *gardes communales* within 1km of the site of the massacre, six permanent barricades on the main access road leading north and south, a further two military bases within around 10km of the village, as well as one police station, one anti-terrorist unit and one *gendarmerie*. And yet, despite this security presence, the inaction of the military is universally recognised. In fact, even General Nezzar himself admits that the security forces did not respond to the three infamous massacres (Raïs, Beni Messous and Bentalha) as the people might have expected them to do, but attempts to provide a justification for the events that unfolded. In his memoirs he offers an explanation that is at best tentative. While recognising various failures ('les délais prolongés des exactions, la présence de forces de sécurité quadrillant les secteurs et l'évanouissement dans la nature des terroristes une fois leurs forfaits accomplis'), he goes on to suggest five factors that would have contributed to the difficulty of the task. It is worth citing his comments in detail:

Les raisons qui expliquent ce qui, à première vue, semble inexplicable, reposent sur les facteurs suivants :

- 1) la présence au sein de la population ciblée de complices actifs totalement sous l'emprise des terroristes ;
- 2) la présence de groupes terroristes implantés dans un tissu urbain à l'intérieur d'infrastructures aménagées facilitant leurs exactions et leur fuite une fois celles-ci commises, toujours au bénéfice d'un écran de complicité ;

⁶⁴ Amnesty International, 'Algeria: Civilian Population Caught in a Spiral of Violence', AI index: MDE 28/23/97 (November 1997), p. 7, available at www.amnesty.org [last accessed 27 April 2010]. See also the Human Rights Watch report, 'Algeria's Human Rights Crisis' (August 1998), available at <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/algeria/> [last accessed 27 April 2010].

- 3) l'urbanisation sauvage et très dense, rendant encore plus difficiles et plus lentes les interventions de secours ;
- 4) la fetwa rendant licite, non seulement l'assassinat de civils, mais légitimant aussi le butin (el ghanima), donnant une onction religieuse à ces crimes ;
- 5) les lieux, pendant les attaques, étaient plongés dans l'obscurité à dessein, engendrant une mêlée entre les victimes et leurs bourreaux.

Dans ces conditions, quand bien même une unité se trouverait à proximité, l'intervention devient très contraignante en raison de l'obscurité, des pièges parsemés, au préalable, sur tous les accès d'intervention possibles et, surtout, de la mêlée entraînant la confusion totale.

Une attitude pour le chef de l'ordre dans ce cas, consiste à se manifester par la présence et par les feux, afin de limiter les pertes sans risques pour les civils et tenter de neutraliser les terroristes en leur coupant le chemin de repli.⁶⁵

Perhaps the most insidious suggestion to emerge here is that the villagers, by virtue of their complicity, are in some way themselves to blame for the atrocities. This reflects allegations made by Yous about comments made by other officials who, both prior to and following the attacks, showed little compassion for those they saw as erstwhile supporters of the enemy. One such example stands out. The Minister for Health visited the village of Bentalha on the morning after the massacre and, when challenged about the military's failure to intervene by one of the victims, whose mother and four-year-old sister had been butchered and whose two other sisters had been abducted, he is alleged to have responded: 'Vous êtes les racines du terrorisme, vous le nourrissez, alors il faut assumer' (p. 199).

Other points need to be raised about Nezzar's remarks. Aside from the fact that the proposed strategy ('se manifester par la présence et par les feux') is clearly not the best way to defend civilians from an onslaught, there appears to be some inconsistency in the claim that intervention was made difficult by the darkness despite the use of lamps. This appears all the more bewildering—and audacious—by the suggestion that such a tactic might 'limiter les pertes sans risques pour les civils'!

⁶⁵ Khaled Nezzar, *Mémoires du général* (Algiers: Chihab, 1999), pp. 81–2.

The issue of military lighting is raised by Yous in his testimony. He describes how lighting was visible from two sources and at two different times. Forty-five minutes after Yous says the massacre began (23:30), headlights from armoured vehicles were seen nearby. They were to remain stationary throughout the attacks. Almost two hours after they arrived, Yous asks: ‘Que font les militaires ? Pourquoi mettent-ils tant de temps à intervenir ? Pourquoi les blindés installés dans la maison de vieillesse, à 1,5 km d’ici, ne sortent-ils pas ?’ (p. 183). Later still (around 03:10), Yous claims that massive projectors were lit, bringing hope to the villagers that the military would finally intervene, and temporarily destabilising the attackers. However, the alleged collusion between the attackers and the military meant that hope was short-lived:

Subitement, des projecteurs s’allument derrière la maison d’Aïtar, et nous éblouissent [...] Les voisins s’écrient les uns après les autres : « Les militaires arrivent ! Les militaires arrivent ! » Apparemment ils ne sont pas très loin. Les assaillants aussi semblent déroutés et se retirent de la terrasse en face, ce qui nous permet de souffler un peu. Mais les chefs, des brutes, arrivent en courant et hurlent aux éléments du groupe armé : « Continuez ! Ne vous laissez pas dérouter ! Prenez tout votre temps, les militaires ne viendront pas. Allez, au travail ! » (pp. 184–5)

Nezzar also mentions that the land around the village had been laid with mines (‘pièges parsemés’) to block the route for anyone wishing to provide assistance. It is surprising that this should serve as a justification for not intervening to defend innocent civilians. Furthermore, the claim is rejected categorically by Yous:

[N]ous n’avons vu aucune mine. Nous sommes absolument certains qu’il n’y en avait pas dans le coin, ni dans les vergers, ni du côté du grand boulevard, où étaient stationnés les militaires. [...] Et il n’y a eu aucune opération de déminage dans notre quartier. En fait il s’agit d’une invention pure et simple des autorités pour essayer de justifier la non-intervention des militaires. (p. 229)⁶⁶

⁶⁶ During Algeria’s periodic report to the UN Human Rights Committee in July 1998, the Algerian delegation was challenged for its failure to carry out demining operations in the relevant sectors, given

He also makes a number of valid points to refute Nezzar's claim. How, he asks, could several inhabitants have managed to escape across the allegedly mined plot of land without coming to harm? Equally, how is it that the inhabitants from neighbouring villages were able to cross the same area in the early hours of the morning? (Yous claims that the only assistance they received was from these civilians, who were prevented by the military from entering Bentalha until the massacre was over – see pp. 191–2.) And when the military finally did enter the village, Yous says they too came to no harm. Sarcastically, he suggests the attackers perhaps thought to remove the mines as they were fleeing.

The final element of interest in Nezzar's remarks is his suggestion that the military tactic was to 'neutralise the terrorists' by cutting off their retreat. No matter how we look at this claim, it is difficult to find in the General's favour: either the tactic was an unmitigated failure (of the attackers who perpetrated the three massacres, one was taken into custody)⁶⁷ or the claim is untruthful. Yous' testimony in this regard is particularly damning. He says that the assailants had to retreat by the very route that was barricaded in several places and which passed by more than one military base. His assertion is that the army vehicles were in fact used to transport the goods that had been pillaged during the attack, and even that local children were forced to assist in this operation before being slaughtered (pp. 213–4).

the army's claim that the areas surrounding the sites of the village massacres were heavily mined; see section 5 of the summary record of the 1682nd meeting of the Human Rights Committee, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.SR.1682.Fr?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.SR.1682.Fr?Opendocument) [last accessed 28 April 2010].

⁶⁷ See Abdelkader Tigha, *Contre-espionnage algérien : Notre guerre contre les islamistes* (Paris: Nouveau Monde, 2008), p. 182.

Section 4.1 – What makes these claims credible?

The claims and counter-claims that I have so far discussed are useful in understanding the extent of the violence in the Algerian conflict, particularly during the infamously bloody year of 1997. However, because of the impossibility of proving or disproving any of these claims, we must consider how it is that such claims could ever have come to be credible. What had changed in the relationships between the different protagonists (civilians, military and Islamists) for there to be such mistrust? Tension had reigned in the village of Bentalha for some time prior to the night of the massacre; this was due to the upsurge in violence in Algeria generally throughout 1997, but in particular as a result of the two other massacres that had taken place shortly beforehand in the surrounding area of Algiers (Raïs and Beni Messous). An unusual scenario is depicted by Yous for this period. He explains that the security forces displayed surprising confidence in their operations despite an increase in attacks, as if they were assured of their safety:

L'atmosphère commence à se détendre, parce qu'il n'y a plus cette présence quotidienne des groupes. Et pourtant, étrangement, à Alger comme dans sa grande banlieue, nous subissons de plus en plus des attaques à la bombe ou armées. Ce qui nous frappe, c'est que les policiers qui se sont terrés dans leurs postes pendant des années se permettent désormais, alors que la population civile vit une recrudescence de la violence de la part des GIA, de circuler dans la rue sans escorte, à pied ou en car. [...] Tout se passe comme si ces dernières étaient assurées de ne rien risquer de la part des « terros ». C'est à n'y rien comprendre. (p. 114)

Yous explains that the Bentalha villagers had requested firearms with which to defend themselves, a process that had already begun in other parts of the country in cases where the military decided that civilians no longer posed a threat as supporters of the Islamist movement and indeed were under threat from those they had previously fed, sheltered and generally abetted in their struggle. This decision to

begin to arm civilians is indicative of the change that had taken place in the civil conflict and can help us to understand much about the claims and counter-claims made in relation to the civilian massacres of the autumn of 1997. In the early years of the conflict there was still considerable support among certain communities for the Islamist cause. It is debatable whether this support was given for ideological reasons, or because civilians felt threatened: ‘Que pouvions-nous faire? Ils menaçaient de nous enterrer vivants ! Vous, vous passez ! Demain, vous serez partis, mais nous, on vit ici !’.⁶⁸ Regardless of the reasons behind their support, it placed some civilians very much on the side of the enemy in the eyes of the military, which in turn explains some of the reported indifference among officials upon learning of the massacres. However, the increasing barbarity of the tactics employed by certain elements of the Islamist resistance, as well as their exploitative treatment of civilians (protection taxes, racketeering), meant that support among the population waned, leaving them exposed to the kind of revenge killings—if that is indeed what they were—seen in 1997. Abdelkader Tigha, a deserter from the Algerian secret services who fled the country and later published his account of the corruption and illegalities of the conflict, tells us that the army saw villages such as Raïs and Beni Messous as ‘villages retournés’ or ‘villages libérés’: they had endured enough suffering at the hands of the ‘terrorists’ to turn them against those they had once seen as their saviours, or, as Tigha puts it, ‘La peur avait changé de côté’.⁶⁹

This goes some way towards explaining several elements of the behaviour on both sides of the conflict in 1997. The first is that, perhaps despite themselves, the

⁶⁸ Villagers cited by Tigha, p. 89. See also: ‘Algérie : les révélations d’un déserteur de la SM’, *Nord-Sud Export*, 427 (21 September 2001).

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 180. This may be a reference to the slogan by the ‘eradicator’, Redha Malek: ‘la peur doit changer de camp’ (cited by Souaïdia, *La sale guerre*, p. 177). I suppose this to mean that instead of fear of military reprisals, the people should be made to fear the Islamists.

villagers who supported Islamist rebels during the early stages of the war had placed themselves in a far more partisan position than they could have known: their decision to cut off their support for violent groups inevitably angered these same groups, but did not necessarily win the immediate favour of the armed forces, who continued to resent the earlier hostility of the FIS electorate. Whether this resentment was sufficiently strong for the army to stand idly by while women and children were being butchered cannot be ascertained with any certainty. Or for that matter whether the army would have in fact contributed to the orchestration of the killings, as Yous has claimed. But it does explain the isolation of the population, and the image of the civilian as *hostage*⁷⁰—bound to offer protection and support to the mutated successor of the FIS they had sought to elect, while equally repulsed by the increasingly violent tactics it employed, and later bound to look to the state for protection, while (justifiably) fearful that they would not receive this protection from the very organs they had sought to depose. The people, it would seem, were blamed for the growth of terrorism. There are numerous examples of officials showing no sympathy for survivors of massacres, remarking that it was the people who voted for the ‘terrorists’ in the first place and that they should now sort out their own mess.⁷¹

To accuse victims of bloodshed of having brought violence upon themselves via the ballot box is callous enough in itself, but it reflects a more deep-rooted and sinister approach to the conflict. For the Islamist project to be defeated unequivocally it had to be perceived as unequivocally damaging to society as a whole; this meant it had to be associated with unforgivable violence. Hence the deliberate blurring of

⁷⁰ Reporters sans frontières, *Le drame algérien : Un peuple en otage* (Paris: La Découverte, 1994). See also Pierre Dévoluy and Mireille Duteil, *La Poudrière algérienne : histoire secrète d’une République sous influence* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1994), p. 359.

⁷¹ For analysis of these responses, see M. S. Lalioui, ‘Reactions of the Algerian Army to the Massacres’, in Bedjaoui et al. (eds), pp. 471–509, p. 475.

terrorism and Islamism. That this was advantageous to the regime is made clear by the words of one official, who, during her appearance before the UN Human rights Committee, described how the initial support for the FIS was eroded as the movement's 'constitutive' violence disgusted voters:

En 1992, la population était certes favorable à l'idéologie du Front islamique du salut et au message trompeur des islamistes, mais elle a largement modifié son point de vue depuis et a compris de quoi se nourrissait cette idéologie. Elle a compris également que la violence des groupes islamistes, nullement réactionnelle, était au contraire constitutive de leur idéologie.⁷²

This blurring of Islamism and violence is at the core of perceptions in the modern world generally. The larger electoral base of Islamist parties tends to be obscured by excessive focus on their (loosely) associated extremist elements. François Burgat blames Western analysis for this misdirected focus,⁷³ but it can of course also be found among those secular proponents in the Muslim world whose worldview is informed by Western values and who know that they will find a sympathetic ear in the West when they reproduce echoes of this obscuring analysis in relation to their own problems at home. And this intellectual relationship is mutual, as Burgat has elsewhere pointed out:

Les médiateurs de notre perception du phénomène islamiste [...] sont souvent ceux dont il menace les convictions et, parfois, le statut. [...] L'Occident inquiet préfère [...] s'adresser à ceux dont la voix rassure. Qu'il est tentant de faire dire par le frère de

⁷² Mme Karadja, representing Algeria during its periodic report to the UN in 1998; see section 41 of the summary record of the 1681st meeting of the Human Rights Committee, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/28c9d7c358512ebb80256650004d5f72?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/28c9d7c358512ebb80256650004d5f72?Opendocument) [last accessed 27 April 2010]. Further information about UN responses to the Algerian conflict is provided in the final section of this chapter.

⁷³ 'La principale erreur du regard occidental consiste [...] à se focaliser sur une frange « intégriste » bien présente, mais tout à fait distincte des majorités électorales que peut former ce courant, et à ignorer ce faisant la plasticité extrême de la référence islamique et sa capacité à produire elle aussi « de l'universel » parfaitement compatible avec « nos » valeurs' (François Burgat, 'La pensée du Midi face aux libertés... au sud de la Méditerranée : « Les courants islamistes face aux libertés » (entretien avec Thierry Fabre)', *Actes Sud*, 19 (November 2006), pp. 56–68, p. 58).

l'autre tout le mal dont on le croit capable et de jouer comme en d'autres temps la carte rassurante d'une hypothétique troisième force !⁷⁴

This blurring tactic was clear in Algeria, where, as political opposition, the Islamist movement initially was not enough of a threat for it to be demonised in terms of public perception. I have outlined the ways in which the FIS approached the political contest, challenging the state on its nationalist credentials, politicising the legacy of Islamic reformism, and largely respecting the constitutional process ahead of the elections. The only threat this represented was to the existing balance of power. What was needed, therefore, was a way to depict political Islam as a violent threat, which in turn required actual violence. The cancelled elections provided just such an opportunity. The violent response to this event was the initial impetus the state needed to highlight the emerging political power as illegitimate; however, more was needed to ensure that the actions of its representatives and their supporters would not be remembered simply as an angry reaction, and that violence and Islamism would be seen as going hand in hand. In order for a long-term hold on power to be secured, the aim of the military would not have been to create the conditions for re-elections as early as possible, but rather to tarnish the opposition in such a way that the re-emergence of a credible Islamist movement in the foreseeable future would be most unlikely. In other words, the violence had to be encouraged, accentuated and prolonged. Or so the claims of Souaïdia, Tigha, Yous and others would appear to suggest.

If we accept this analysis, then we can understand why the Algerian security forces might have infiltrated the armed Islamic groups—not to destroy them from the inside, but rather to direct their violence towards events that would be certain to

⁷⁴ Burgat, *L'Islamisme au Maghreb*, p. 9. For Burgat's views on distortion of the truth and the role of the secret services in Algeria, see *L'Islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida*, pp. 173–8.

generate the maximum repulsion among observers, both at home and abroad. We can also understand—if not accept unconditionally—the claim that army personnel, disguised as Islamists, carried out staged attacks on innocent civilians. And that they would have stood by and watched as ‘terrorists’—real or not—ransacked and murdered. This, the FIS has argued, is the regime’s way of seeking a ‘psychological’ end to the war:

Selon toute vraisemblance, c’est [l’issue psychologique] qui a été choisie par le pouvoir parce qu’elle favorise la violence, les événements sanglants et les horreurs. Son but est de marginaliser, d’isoler, de discréditer et de démonétiser l’adversaire aux yeux de l’opinion publique nationale et internationale.⁷⁵

Whether accurate or not, the view that the military were at least complicit in the crimes being committed was not uncommon among the people. This makes sense if one considers the suspicion that already reigned in the early years of the conflict, as we saw in my analysis of Boudiaf’s assassination in Chapter II. Indeed, it has been suggested that this suspicion pre-dated the conflict and had long been a feature of Algerian politics: ‘by the late 1980s, an increasing number of Algerians were no longer simply suspicious of the government’s motives and deeply disenchanted with its nationalist project, but were convinced that it was working against them’.⁷⁶ During the conflict, so widespread was mistrust of the military, Yous tells us, that people felt no need to even explain it: ‘Le plus choquant, c’est que, à l’unanimité, tous disent que ce sont les militaires qui nous ont tués. C’est tellement évident que personne ne demande comment nous en arrivons à cette conclusion et pourquoi nous en sommes si sûrs’ (p. 201). For their part, the military felt resentment towards those civilians who had worked against them by assisting local resistance fighters. What

⁷⁵ FIS document (‘Pour une stratégie de sortie de crise en Algérie’) cited in Denaud, p. 262.

⁷⁶ Paul A. Silverstein, ‘An Excess of Truth: Violence, Conspiracy Theorizing and the Algerian Civil War’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 75/4 (autumn 2002), pp. 643–74, p. 652.

appears to have emerged from this climate of mutual mistrust is a situation in which no-one was safe. Why? Because no-one was seen as being beyond the conflict; almost everyone had reason to fear retribution. Consider the following two citations from Tigha's account, the first in which he telephones the Colonel responsible for his unit in the middle of the night to inform him that the massacre at Raïs is unfolding, and the second in which he later interrogates one of the assailants captured after this same massacre:

– Les premiers messages parlent d'un massacre de civils dans le village de Raïs. Les barbus seraient descendus et auraient tué de minuit jusqu'à 4 heures du matin.

– Qu'ils aillent se faire foutre. Laissez ces chiens se faire massacrer !

On a un peu tiqué, mais on comprenait ce qu'il voulait dire. Le village de Raïs était en pleine zone GIA, acquis totalement à la cause des islamistes. On n'allait pas pleurer parce qu'ils s'étaient fait massacrer.⁷⁷

La colère m'est montée d'un coup. J'ai hurlé :

– Mais pourquoi des innocents, des civils, pourquoi ?

– Ils n'étaient pas innocents ! Les muftis du GIA les ont condamnés à mourir parce qu'ils ont arrêté de nous aider. C'est des *Kharawidjs*. Nous, on exécute ce que disent les muftis.

– Mais c'étaient des musulmans, non ? Des innocents ?

Il a baissé la tête sans répondre.

– Ils n'étaient pas innocents. Plus personne n'est innocent...⁷⁸

Section 5 – Nezzar v Souaïdia

The question remains, however, as to whether we can indeed accept this analysis. Did the military really feed the violence? Did it disregard its civilian population in favour of its propaganda? Did it deliberately eschew the conditions necessary for early elections in order to discredit its opposition in the long term? Unfortunately, military sources relative to the massacres are few in number, so I have had to rely

⁷⁷ Tigha, p. 178.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 183.

more on those who denounce the inaction of the state than on the regime's defenders. There is one case, however, where testimony in favour of General Nezzar—and the security forces generally—is well documented. I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter the defamation trial that took place in Paris between the General and the author of *La sale guerre*, Habib Souaïdia. On 27 May 2001, Souaïdia appeared on a televised debate in which he accused various generals from the ANP of widespread corruption and of having committed massacres and summary executions. In particular, Nezzar launched a legal challenge against the following remarks:

Cela fait dix années qu'il n'y a pas de président [en Algérie], plus même. Il y avait des généraux, ce sont eux les politiciens, c'est eux les décideurs, c'est eux qui ont fait cette guerre. C'est eux qui ont tué des milliers de gens pour rien du tout. C'est eux qui ont décidé d'arrêter le processus électoral, c'est eux les vrais responsables. [...] Je ne peux pas pardonner [...] au général Nezzar, ex-ministre de la Défense. Il faut qu'on juge les coupables. [...] Ce sont les ex-déserteurs de l'armée française qui ont mené le pays vers l'anarchie, vers la faillite.⁷⁹

In the event, the charges brought by General Nezzar were nonsuited by the court, but this trial is nonetheless very useful in our consideration of military culpability during the conflict. The evidence from both sides of the dispute provides many pages of fascinating reading, as witnesses are indulged by the court to offer their wider views of the conflict and of military power in Algeria generally, but I have chosen to focus on the General's side of the story to see if any real challenge can be made to the claims made by parties like Souaïdia, Tigha, Samraoui, Yous and others. Nezzar's case is made in a book, co-written by him, detailing the court proceedings and the background to the trial. *Un Procès pour la vérité* includes a lengthy section detailing his personal involvement in the war and events leading up to it, as well as attacks on the credibility of the various actors who have invested so heavily in

⁷⁹ Habib Souaïdia (remarks broadcast during 'Droits d'auteurs : Spéciale Afrique', La Cinquième, 27 May 2001).

discrediting him. Given the peripheral detail (and speculation) admitted by the court, this case has the advantage of serving as a kind of substitute trial for the military role in the conflict as a whole.⁸⁰

Of interest here is the way in which Nezzar sets about attacking the credibility of his detractors. If we look closely at his tactics in highlighting the methodological shortcomings of Souaïdia et al., we see that it is a rather fragile thesis that develops. One of the strategies he employs is to reiterate the attacks made against the Algerian security forces in a way that is intended to make them appear ludicrous in themselves. In other words, he himself raises very little substantive evidence to show the allegations to be false. For example, in an attack on *La sale guerre*, Nezzar remarks that the similarities between it and *Le livre blanc sur la répression en Algérie (1991–1994)* are striking.⁸¹ The intention is to suggest that one is merely a copy of the other, but the General seems not to consider that readers might see these similarities as proof of consistent and well-founded claims. Elsewhere, citing an interview that François Burgat gave to *La libre Belgique*, Nezzar makes no attempt even to deny the claim that a fax sent by the GIA claiming responsibility for certain massacres had been sent from a machine located on a military base; it would appear that the use of an exclamation mark suffices to disparage such a claim: ‘Le 02.02.1998, dans une interview accordée au journal belge La libre Belgique, [Burgat] affirme que « le dernier fax du GIA revendiquant certains massacres provenait d’une

⁸⁰ As Nezzar points out, those who would like to have seen a trial specifically related to the alleged culpability of Algerian military officers would have the opportunity in Paris to unearth many details about the conflict: ‘Je savais qu’en allant affronter Habib Souaïdia [...] j’allais permettre à MM. Comte et Bourdon, ainsi qu’à Aït Ahmed et aux porte-parole des intégristes, de « se rattraper » pour le procès qu’ils n’ont pas pu imposer et organiser’ (Nezzar, *Un Procès pour la vérité*, p. 13).

⁸¹ Comité algérien des militants libres de la dignité humaine et des droits de l’homme, *Livre blanc sur la répression en Algérie (1991–1994)*, vol. I (Geneva: Hoggar, 1995), vol. II (1996). An example of Nezzar’s remarks is as follows: ‘Les méthodes de torture relatées par des témoignages rapportés dans *Le Livre blanc* sont identiques à ceux [sic] évoqués par Souaïdia’ (*Un Procès pour la vérité*, p. 128).

caserne algéroise de la sécurité militaire » !'.⁸² Similarly, in his analysis of the first round of elections in December 1991 and the opposition to the subsequent military intervention, he derides the view put forward by the FIS that the tightly controlled military power was acting against the wishes of the people. Again, the exclamation mark is the only means he has of denouncing the party's 'argument politique redoutable pour faire apparaître « le pouvoir d'Alger » comme « une junte militaire » opposée au « choix du peuple » !'.⁸³

Another curious choice made by Nezzar in his defence was to cite lengthy passages by Mohamed Sifaoui, Souaïdia's co-writer, which show Sifaoui's hostility towards the security forces. Sifaoui makes it clear from the outset, when giving his testimony, that he has nothing but contempt for the manner in which power is distributed in Algeria, although two things pushed him to testify: the gravity of the claims made by Habib Souaïdia and his eternal gratitude to the army for having interrupted the electoral process in January 1992.⁸⁴ But while Nezzar had no control over what Sifaoui would say during his testimony, he made the unusual choice to include in his own publication the following citation from that testimony:

L'intérêt majeur du témoignage de Habib n'est pas de refaire pour la énième fois l'histoire de ces années-là, mais d'apporter des faits précis et irréfutables sur le déroulement concret de la guerre, les exactions des groupes armés et la folie des généraux. Ce livre doit être vu comme une déposition qui pourra peut-être servir un jour devant un tribunal qui jugera les responsables.⁸⁵

⁸² Ibid, p. 125.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 67.

⁸⁴ '[J]e suis quelqu'un qui a toujours combattu le système auquel Monsieur Nezzar a appartenu et je continuerai de le combattre tant qu'il n'y aura pas de rupture et tant qu'il n'y aura pas une autre Algérie plus démocratique, plus républicaine [...] je tiens à vous rendre hommage Monsieur Nezzar à vous et à vos collègues pour avoir arrêté le processus électoral et pour avoir empêché [sic] des islamistes, des intégristes de faire de l'Algérie un autre Afghanistan' (testimony of Mohamed Sifaoui, *ibid*, p. 303).

⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 144–5.

While these methods of refutation are clearly ineffectual, the General does raise one point that should not in my view be lightly discarded. He develops the view that there is a widespread attempt to discredit the very core of Algerian governance, and that the means employed to do this are unethical and even self-delegitimising. He tends to see, in the diverse groups and individuals who have been working to expose the Algerian authorities to international reproach, a homogenous whole, responsible for destabilising Algeria since the 1980s:

Il serait un jour intéressant de savoir comment ces journalistes, ces « experts », ces défenseurs des droits de l'homme, ces historiens de nationalités et d'horizons si divers, ces militants passionnés de la grande cause du peuple algérien, réislamisé et gouverné à la taliban, se sont retrouvés et attelés à la même cause dans un savant partage des tâches [...] ils ont été les tâcherons quotidiens de la grande œuvre de déstabilisation de l'Algérie commencée au début de la décennie 80.⁸⁶

Such a position can be seen in different ways. It might be seen as a refusal to engage with the potentially damaging attacks on the army and him personally, thereby disregarding them as unworthy of detailed debate. One might argue that this is insufficient, that the army's culpability is all the more probable if parties such as Nezzar will not deign to take on their detractors. Yet it is not so uncommon for state authorities to ignore the many and diverse critiques of their actions, except where compelled to respond by political or legal imperatives. And, as we will see in the final section of this chapter, despite pressure from the United Nations, the Algerian authorities preserved this tradition by resisting outside 'interference'.

Alternatively, Nezzar's decision to portray his critics as a homogenous whole may be seen as an astute observation—an observation that there is something about the way in which criticism has been organised that should raise one's scepticism. This cannot be discarded. It is worth outlining in a little more detail the kinds of

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 118.

reservations that Nezzar and others put forward regarding the ways in which the case against the military has developed. While I do not necessarily endorse the General's accusations, it is in the interest of balanced inquiry that we should at least consider the possibility that the thesis of military corruption is all too easily adopted by certain parties.

Section 5.1 – François Gèze and the 'conspiracy theory'

One target of Nezzar's attacks is François Gèze, Director of Editions La Découverte, the publishing house responsible for many of the publications hostile to the Algerian military, including: *La sale guerre*;⁸⁷ *Qui a tué à Bentalha ?*; *Algérie, le livre noir*; *La nouvelle guerre d'Algérie*; and Souaïdia's account of the defamation trial, *Le procès de « La sale guerre »*. Gèze's involvement in so many publications of this sort is striking in itself, but even more pertinent are the active contributions he has sometimes made to actual content. A 'postface', for example, is included in Yous' *Qui a tué à Bentalha ?* This lengthy section of the book (about one quarter) is written by Gèze and Yous' co-author, Salima Mellah, who together reinforce the primary accusations made in the main body of the book. The length of this section alone is enough to raise questions about the editor's role. Is it appropriate for Gèze to add weight to a publication that is under his professional auspices? This is a question for the individual reader, but it is easy to see how the editor's apparently partisan stance might cause some readers to be wary of the information being put forward. Elsewhere, Gèze plays a key role in the compilation of data: again with Salima Mellah, he writes the footnotes in Souaïdia's account of the defamation trial. The importance of this cannot be underestimated, as the notes in such a publication are

⁸⁷ Souaïdia's book was first published by La Découverte (Paris, 2001), although the version I have cited herein is the Folio edition published by Gallimard.

what single it out; after all the transcripts of the different testimonies and summations that make up the trial are accessible by the public. By compiling these notes, therefore, Gèze chose to guide the reader through the proceedings using references that would ensure the case for the defence was strengthened and that that of the claimant was weakened. Such acts have convinced those who reject the accusations made against the military that Gèze is more of an activist than an editor.

This is probably true, as Gèze has himself been the author of several publications detailing the role of the security services in propagating Islamist violence. Again collaborating with Salima Mellah, in 2007 he produced a long study of the rise of Algeria's main terrorist group, *Al-Qaeda au pays du Maghreb islamique* (AQMI).⁸⁸ This document argues that the rise of this group, formerly named the *Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat* (GSPC), is directly linked to inter-clan conflict in the upper echelons of the Algerian state, namely between the 'clan' of the incumbent President Bouteflika, who the authors argue is diplomatically closest to France and Russia, and that of General Mohammed Médiène (or General 'Tewfik'), who is head of the security services (*Département de renseignement et de sécurité* – DRS) and allegedly favours greater alliances with the US with a view to generating higher oil-based revenue. The theory presented is that General Médiène sought to bolster Algeria's pro-American status by heightening the need for its role in the 'War on Terror'. This would have required the growth of a radical terrorist group in the aftermath of Bouteflika's 1999 *concorde civile*, when so many militants from the conflict were awarded an amnesty. The GSPC—and subsequently the AQMI—provided just such a context, and also had the corollary effect of undermining the

⁸⁸ François Gèze and Salima Mellah, '« Al-Qaeda au Maghreb », ou la très étrange histoire du GSPC algérien', published online by Algeria-Watch on 22 September 2007, available at www.algeria-watch.org/pdf/pdf_fr/gspc_etrange_histoire.pdf [last accessed 5 April 2010].

President's historic concord. It is not within the remit of this thesis to explore this publication in greater detail, but I refer readers to the considerable debate it has provoked.⁸⁹

Gèze has also produced several articles on his own.⁹⁰ These are thorough and consistent with his assertion that senior military officers are responsible for orchestrating much of the violence in Algeria. Indeed, were it not for his parallel role as editor, Gèze would be seen in the same light as any other commentator on Algeria. It is clear, however, that his neutrality as an editor is undermined by his personal interest in disseminating views that undermine the integrity of the Algerian military. This ambition is perhaps not in itself reproachable, for there is strong evidence that the military has indeed displayed illegality, injustice and intolerance in its effective rule of Algeria since 1962. Besides, what editor can claim true neutrality? It is common knowledge that publishing houses often display a preference for work of a certain nature; *La Découverte* is simply an example of unusually partisan support in what is an unavoidably emotive subject area. The editor has been accused of much graver offences, however. The trial in Paris heard evidence from Mohamed Sifaoui, co-author of Souaïdia's *La sale guerre*.⁹¹ He claims that there was manipulation on the part of those who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the publication. He depicts a rather naive Souaïdia, who, having arrived in France with little money or knowledge of his new surroundings, developed links with certain parties who appear again and again as the authors or promoters of pamphlets, website articles and other

⁸⁹ See for example the article and subsequent comments at <http://www.rue89.com/2007/09/30/geze-la-guerre-des-clans-relance-le-terrorisme-en-algerie> [last accessed 07 April 2010]; and for an attack on Gèze's theories, see Antoine Vitkine's article at <http://www.rue89.com/2007/10/02/sur-lalgerie-les-theories-du-complot-de-francois-geze> (this includes comments from Abdelkader Tigha).

⁹⁰ François Gèze: 'Françalgérie : sang, intox et corruption', *Mouvements*, 3 (2002), pp. 63–73; 'Armée et nation en Algérie : l'irréversible divorce?', *Hérodote*, 1 (2005), pp. 175–203; (with Salima Mellah) 'Algérie : impossible justice pour les victimes des « années de sang »', *Mouvements*, 1 (2008), pp. 150–7.

⁹¹ See pp. 302–14 of Nezzar, *Un Procès pour la vérité*.

publications that speak out against the Algerian military and broader state structures. Sifaoui highlights Gèze as the key figure who manipulated Souaïdia's story to put forward his own version of how events had unfolded in Algeria. In line with Nezzar's assertion that *La sale guerre* was 'le point culminant de la campagne menée par François Gèze', his testimony suggests that for years the editor from La Découverte had been waiting for solid evidence to confirm what he already suspected—that the violence in Algeria was the product of army generals and not of Islamist terrorists: 'Monsieur Souaïdia a apporté ces soi-disant preuves qui manquaient à Monsieur Gèze'.⁹² Sifaoui also accuses Gèze of actually modifying the manuscript with a view to strengthening the case against the army and diluting the case against the Islamists. He says, for example, that where he, Sifaoui, had written 'terroristes du FIS', he later found in the finished text that the reference to the FIS had been deleted: 'Cela veut dire qu'on veut jeter le doute sur l'identité des assassins parce que c'est un livre militant, parce que c'est un éditeur qui ne respecte pas ses auteurs'.⁹³

The antagonism between the two men did not only emerge during the trial, however. Gèze had taken legal action against Sifaoui in February of the same year, for allegedly defamatory remarks made against him in relation to his handling of the publication of *La sale guerre*. On the day following this publication (8 February 2001), Sifaoui issued a statement to the press in which he accused Gèze of deliberately deleting elements of the text (e.g., passages referring to the violence committed by Islamist groups) in order to place the blame squarely on the shoulders of the army generals. Later, Sifaoui actually published his own account of the debacle, arguing that he was mistreated by La Découverte and that his work was

⁹² Ibid, p. 121 and p. 309 respectively.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 310.

misrepresented.⁹⁴ Gèze correctly rejects the accusation that *La sale guerre* exculpates the Islamists (it is filled with passages that make it clear the extent to which the author abhors the acts and ideology of the Islamists), and also argues that the intention was never to represent the views of Mr Sifaoui, but solely those of the author: '[le contrat] concernait, exclusivement et précisément, l'édition du témoignage personnel de M. Souaïdia, qui serait recueilli et mis en forme par M. Sifaoui'.⁹⁵ He goes on to counter that it was in fact Sifaoui who was guilty of manipulation, as he radically amended the facts as presented to him by Souaïdia, offering his own political analysis of the Islamist movement. These additions were deleted from the published version, says Gèze. Interestingly, he also rejects Sifaoui's implication that he took sides, saying this would be incompatible with his duties as an editor: 'cette allégation porte gravement atteinte à mon honneur et à ma considération en ce qu'elle m'impute un parti pris inconciliable avec mes devoirs d'éditeur'.⁹⁶ This would appear to be at odds with the contributions Gèze has made to publications under his editorial responsibility: after all, how can one write a lengthy postface explicitly reinforcing the arguments put forward by the primary author, or carefully compile footnotes for the proceedings of a legal trial that clearly corroborate the evidence given by the defence and undermine that of the claimant, and not consider that one has adopted a 'parti pris'? In his acknowledgements for another La Découverte publication, *L'Islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida*, François Burgat offers special thanks to Gèze, who he says proved to be 'bien plus qu'un

⁹⁴ Mohamed Sifaoui, « *La sale guerre* » : *histoire d'une imposture* (Batna: Chihab, 2002). See also: Rachid Mokhtari, 'La sale guerre : Sifaoui relance la polémique', *Le Matin*, 11 June 2002. It is notable that Sifaoui's book is available in Algeria, while Souaïdia's is not.

⁹⁵ Citation taken from the transcript of Gèze's statement to the press, as published by Algeria-Watch, available at http://www.algeria-watch.org/farticle/sale_guerre/sifaoui_diffamation.htm [last accessed 6 May 2010].

⁹⁶ Ibid.

éditeur'.⁹⁷ Does this imply that his contribution was more than professional? I hesitate to judge, but it would be interesting to hear a comprehensive explanation from Gèze himself of exactly how he sees his role. Unfortunately, he did not give testimony at the Nezzar v Souaïdia trial, much to the disappointment of the counsel for the plaintiff;⁹⁸ however, in his publication of the court proceedings, he does provide an explanation for his personal involvement and the background to his decision to publish so many books related to the Algerian question. It is all too brief, regrettably. In it he does not account for the lengthy contribution he made to *Qui a tué à Bentalha ?*, nor does he defend his decision to compile the footnotes for *Le Procès de « La sale guerre »*, saying simply that he is doing his job as a publisher by giving voice to those on both sides of the Mediterranean who seek the truth about the 'real' distribution of power in Algeria.⁹⁹

What, then, is the significance of Nezzar and Sifaoui's attacks on the methods behind their detractors? Their case is that the example of François Gèze is not an isolated one, and that much of the public hostility towards the army generals has been framed either directly by or with the help of a small community of people intent on propagating the same message—that the violence in Algeria is primarily the product of a military elite intent on staying in power—and who are willing to neglect the rigours of proper research to this end. There is no clarity in this 'dirty war', even more than ten years on from the height of the conflict. What the Nezzar v Souaïdia trial shows is that we must exercise great caution in reading any material that takes a

⁹⁷ Burgat, *L'Islamisme à l'heure d'Al-Qaida*, p. 12. Note also that Burgat and Gèze have collaborated in the past; see François Burgat and François Gèze, 'L'Union européenne et les islamistes : le cas de l'Algérie', in Toby Archer and Heidi Tuhtanen (eds), *Islamist Opposition Parties around the World and the Potential for European Union Engagement* (Helsinki: Finnish Institute of International Affairs, 2007), pp. 13–25.

⁹⁸ 'M. Gèze n'est pas venu, je le déplore' (Maître Bernard Gorny in his closing statement, cited in Nezzar, *Un Procès pour la vérité*, p. 423).

⁹⁹ Habib Souaïdia, *Le Procès de « La sale guerre »*, pp. 15–7.

clear position about the truth of what happened during the conflict. There is evidently cause for concern about the potential role played by the military in exacerbating and even perpetrating some of the most horrific violence seen during the conflict, but equally there are legitimate questions to be asked about the motives and methods of those who seek to denounce the military leaders for their perceived abuses of power. Ultimately, however, Nezzar's accusation that the defence in this trial are 'militants pour une cause' and that the counsel for the defence were 'blinded' by their ideological stance is hardly sufficient to discredit the widespread reports of military abuses.¹⁰⁰

In Chapter III, I highlighted the political intentions of the FIS and showed how it was ultimately denied political expression by the military coup of 1992. This offensive was then reinforced by the repression of the conflict, when political opposition quickly turned to apparently chaotic violent resistance. There can be no doubt that much of this violence came from angry Islamists. It is reasonable to assume that many of these welcomed the military repression, as it provided an invitation to take up arms and thereby forge a substantial stratum in society that depended on war as an 'economico-political resource'. This kind of resistance, with its dark network of *émirs* and brutal subjugation of the population, is the source of Martinez' analysis, but did not represent the wider Islamist movement. It had neither the political foundation nor the majority support that the FIS enjoyed, and because it was not representative of the Islamist movement, the regime could not depend on it alone to discredit that movement. This analysis, quite apart from the specific evidence they provide, is what makes the testimony of people like Souaïdia, Tigha, Yous and others so credible: without a wider, generically 'Islamist' network of

¹⁰⁰ Nezzar, *Un Procès pour la vérité*, pp. 153–4.

violence, the regime would have been placed under enormous pressure in the short term to readmit the FIS to the political sphere.

At least three elements of my analysis so far show how the political nature of the FIS was stunted and even disfigured by the military regime: the decision to deny the FIS' electoral victory of December 1991, despite its legalist (albeit populist and at times provocative) behaviour; the regime's refusal to consider the FIS's proposals in the Sant'Egidio platform; and the suspected tactics of the regime during the conflict, when the Islamist movement as a whole was tarnished by illegality and violence. Nonetheless, I have emphasised caution in any assessment of the regime's culpability. While there can be no doubt that the intervention of January 1992 was unconstitutional and unjust, and criticism of the regime for this need not be restrained, it would be preferable that the allegations of mass murder by a sovereign state be made in a more legal (or at least a more rigorously academic) framework than is currently the case. The informality of the debate, with its reliance on blogs, online publications and semi-journalistic writing, ultimately undermines the seriousness of the accusations and makes it less likely that those responsible for the killings will be held accountable. The example of François Gèze highlights this problem: the case against the regime would better be served by *La Découverte* publications that made no mention of the editor personally and did not include his work. He would then be free to contribute his own views in the form of articles and books, but perhaps through another publisher. Furthermore, the strength of his convictions is cause for concern: in a conflict where historical accuracy is so difficult to achieve, such a complete and unerring explanation of events is unconvincing. A more cautious and nuanced reading would be preferable.

Section 6 – Resisting UN pressure

The Algerian authorities were the subject of some formal scrutiny, although this was limited. It mainly came in the form of a United Nations panel, which visited the country from 22 July to 4 August 1998. This visit came in the aftermath of Algeria's second periodic report to the Human Rights Committee, an obligation incumbent on all states that have signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).¹⁰¹ The Committee's concluding observations were made on 29 July 1998.¹⁰² Before looking at these observations in more detail, I would first like to look at the ways in which the delegation tried to deflect responsibility for the crisis.

Section 6.1 – Deflecting responsibility

The function of periodic reports to the UN Human Rights Committee is to assess the extent to which signatories to the Covenant are upholding their obligations. States are requested to submit their own reports assessing the progress made and the status of any current difficulties, and these are then challenged by a panel of independent experts. In the case of Algeria, the report was submitted with a delay of two years, and the Committee 'observes that [the Algerian government] does not provide sufficient specific data on the prevailing human rights crisis'.¹⁰³ That it identified a 'human rights crisis' is highly significant, as this was expressly denied by the Algerian authorities in their report.¹⁰⁴ This was a recurrent feature of official

¹⁰¹ Algeria signed the Covenant on 12 December 1989. Its second periodic report is available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.101.Add.1.Fr?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.101.Add.1.Fr?Opendocument) [last accessed 28 April 2010].

¹⁰² The full report is available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.79.Add.95.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.79.Add.95.En?Opendocument) [last accessed 27 April 2010].

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, para. 2.

¹⁰⁴ '[I]t was the emergence of terrorism, and not a political crisis of human rights, that had occasioned human rights violations' (M. Dembri, representing Algeria; see section 13 of the summary record of the 1681st meeting of the Human Rights Committee, available at

responses to international pressure for independent inquiries into the violence. By offering a reading of the violence as the product of terrorism alone and by insisting that an independent inquiry would infringe upon Algeria's sovereignty, the authorities frustrated the UN High Commissioner, Mary Robinson, who refused to see the Algerian violence as a matter of internal security:

Je n'accepte pas que sous le prétexte de ne pas violer la souveraineté algérienne nous ne puissions rien dire, alors que des gens sont massacrés. Je me suis heurtée la semaine passée sur ce point avec le ministre algérien des Affaires étrangères. [...] Les massacres et autres atrocités à l'encontre des civils innocents ont pris une telle ampleur en Algérie que je refuse de considérer cette situation comme exclusivement interne. Les droits de l'homme ne connaissent pas de frontières'.¹⁰⁵

As I have already suggested, the problem of methodology and truth pervades analysis of the Algerian conflict; the example of François Gèze shows that greater care is needed in assessing the responsibility of the authorities. The Algerian delegation in Geneva were mindful of this problem and emphasised it in their defence: 'Le propos du débat entre le Comité et la délégation doit être de soumettre à un esprit critique les sources utilisées, afin de sortir du domaine des allégations pour se situer sur le plan de l'établissement des faits'.¹⁰⁶ However, a member of the panel challenged the delegation's tendency to distance the authorities from responsibility, arguing that even if the culpability of the security forces could not be established, the government was obliged under the ICCPR to take action on *all* human rights

[http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/28c9d7c358512ebb80256650004d5f72?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/28c9d7c358512ebb80256650004d5f72?Opendocument) [last accessed 27 April 2010]. Note: the original language adopted for these sessions alternates between French and English. I cite the original in each case.

¹⁰⁵ Cited by A. Aroua, 'L'Organisation des Nations Unies et les Massacres en Algérie', in Bedjaoui et al. (eds), pp. 865–950, p. 878.

¹⁰⁶ M. Dembri, representing Algeria; see section 20 of the summary record of the 1682nd meeting of the Human Rights Committee, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.SR.1682.Fr?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.SR.1682.Fr?Opendocument) [last accessed 28 April 2010].

violations committed on its territory, irrespective of who was behind such acts.¹⁰⁷

Crucially, this was later supported by the Committee chairperson:

L'État partie porte également une responsabilité vis-à-vis des activités criminelles, quelle qu'en soit l'origine, ainsi que des activités des autorités au pouvoir durant la période couverte par le rapport. Dans ce contexte, le Comité a constaté, à partir notamment des renseignements communiqués par la délégation algérienne, que la protection de la population par l'État souffrait d'insuffisances.¹⁰⁸

The attempt by the authorities to deflect responsibility for the crisis is also clear from their insistence that in January 1992 they were forced into action by 'terrorism', and also that it was not the democratic process, but the electoral process, that was interrupted.¹⁰⁹ The implication that they were taken by surprise is later made explicit: 'at the beginning of the emergency, the Algerian security forces had been relatively unprepared to deal with a form of violence until then unknown in the country'.¹¹⁰ This appears disingenuous for at least two reasons. First, the level of repression operated against the FIS and the wider Islamist movement during the summer and autumn of 1991, detailed earlier, would suggest that preparations were well under way for the conflict. This is supported by Souaïdia's claim that recruitment was boosted ahead of the war. Secondly, to say that the kind of violence experienced at the beginning of the conflict was unfamiliar is clearly misleading. Not only had guerrilla violence been the *modus operandi* of the liberation struggle, but in the 1980s the authorities had had to fight Islamist militia in the form of Bouyali's MIA.

¹⁰⁷ M. Lallah, representing the panel; *ibid*, section 3.

¹⁰⁸ See section 55 of the summary record of the 1684th meeting of the Human Rights Committee, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.SR.1684.Fr?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.SR.1684.Fr?Opendocument) [last accessed 28 April 2010].

¹⁰⁹ 'The terrorist attacks on the new institutional structure had led the authorities, in January 1992, to interrupt, not the democratic process as was too often wrongly asserted, but the electoral process' (Mr. Dembri, representing Algeria; see section 3 of the summary record of the 1681st meeting of the Human Rights Committee, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/28c9d7c358512ebb80256650004d5f72?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/28c9d7c358512ebb80256650004d5f72?Opendocument) [last accessed 27 April 2010].

¹¹⁰ Mr. Abba; *ibid*, section 27.

The delegation's reliance on *terrorism* as the cause of the conflict is a means of relinquishing responsibility. This was identified by members of the panel, who criticised Algeria's excessively broad definition of terrorism: 'under a new definition [in the Algerian report], terrorism included acts designed "to hinder traffic or freedom of movement on the roads and fill public places with crowds", or "to hinder the functioning of public services". That definition seemed unduly broad'.¹¹¹ Another delegate supported these remarks, adding that this definition 'seemed to violate the basic principles of law'.¹¹² And finally, it was suggested that the definition allowed for far too much interpretation on the part of the authorities:

Under that definition, any act whatsoever which, in the opinion of the prosecutor or the police, had been carried out with any of a wide range of different intentions would constitute terrorism. [...] That formulation was so broad as to constitute an infringement of articles 9 and 14 of the Covenant.¹¹³

This is perhaps the most important point here: that a loose definition of terrorism allowed the authorities to justify massive repression, even where, as during the FIS demonstration of June 1991, the 'terrorists' were guilty of no more than 'hindering traffic' or 'filling public places with crowds'. Such repression completely undermined the legality and legitimacy of the authorities:

[U]ne modification des dispositions de la loi définissant le terrorisme permet à présent aux autorités de prendre pour cible n'importe quel comportement public voire privé et tout porte à croire que ce sont les fondements même de l'état de droit qui sont remis en

¹¹¹ Mr. Klein, representing the panel; see section 66 of the summary record of the 1681st meeting of the Human Rights Committee, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/28c9d7c358512ebb80256650004d5f72?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/28c9d7c358512ebb80256650004d5f72?Opendocument) [last accessed 27 April 2010]. For the full definition as contained in the amended Algerian *Code pénal*, see para. 102 of Algeria's second periodic report: [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.101.Add.1.Fr?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.101.Add.1.Fr?Opendocument) [last accessed 28 April 2010].

¹¹² Ms. Medina Quiroga; *ibid*, section 70.

¹¹³ Lord Colville; *ibid*, section 76.

cause. Il est tout à fait légitime de combattre le terrorisme, mais ce combat doit être mené dans le strict respect de la légalité.¹¹⁴

Section 6.2 – Concluding observations of the UN Human Rights Committee

In its report, Algeria made it clear that the only obstacle between it and progress, well-being, solidarity and social justice was the ‘dérive terroriste’, which it said exploited the ‘sacred values of the Algerian people’.¹¹⁵ When read in light of the atrocities committed against Algerian civilians, this ‘aspiration’ rings hollow. Indeed, the arguments put forward by the delegation generally did not convince the Committee of the regime’s good intentions. In its concluding observations, while it commended the Algerian government for its compliance with procedures and emphasised its full solidarity with the Algerian people, it highlighted a number of concerns relevant to the state’s respect for the ICCPR.

Perhaps chief among these is the uncertainty surrounding the massacres, in terms both of the lack of support from the security forces and the identity of the attackers. The Committee said it was ‘appalled’ by the level of the violence and was ‘concerned at the lack of timely or preventive measures of protection to the victims from police or military officials in the vicinity and at the persistent allegations of collusion of members of the security forces in terrorist attacks’.¹¹⁶ In this regard, it urged the authorities to establish independent inquiries in order to determine who

¹¹⁴ M. Pocar, representing the panel; see section 8 of the summary record of the 1682nd meeting of the Human Rights Committee, available at [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.SR.1682.Fr?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.SR.1682.Fr?Opendocument) [last accessed 28 April 2010].

¹¹⁵ ‘On conviendra que les tourmentes apparues dans la transition générale ouverte en 1989, et particulièrement la dérive terroriste, sous couvert des valeurs sacrées du peuple algérien, peuvent être des facteurs contraignants, mais ne sauraient en aucun cas obérer l’aspiration générale de la société algérienne au progrès et au mieux-être, à la solidarité et à la justice sociale, en un mot à la recherche de dynamiques vigoureuses pour inscrire le destin collectif dans les puissantes et positives conjonctions du devenir universel’ (para. 2 of the second periodic report: [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.101.Add.1.Fr?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.101.Add.1.Fr?Opendocument) [last accessed 28 April 2010]).

¹¹⁶ Section 6: [http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/CCPR.C.79.Add.95.En?Opendocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/CCPR.C.79.Add.95.En?Opendocument) [last accessed 27 April 2010].

was behind the killings, including investigations within the security forces, ‘from the lowest to the highest levels’.¹¹⁷ This does not amount to an endorsement of the allegations analysed in this chapter, but the fact that the Committee would urge internal investigations shows that they are reasonably credible.

This is consistent with the Committee’s reaction to other allegations made against the Algerian authorities. As well as highlighting the state’s apparent failure to protect its citizens, it expresses concern over the ‘less than satisfactory responses’ to the ‘innumerable reports’ of extrajudicial executions (section 7). Similarly, extrajudicial detention is identified as an area where allegations appear credible (section 12). State-sponsored torture (section 9) and disappearances (section 10) are further singled out as phenomena that undermined the state’s adherence to the ICCPR. Finally, the regime’s firm hold on power and abhorrence of any threat to that power are highlighted in the Committee’s criticism of two inadequacies: freedom of thought and freedom of association. At section 16, one reads:

[I]n practice numerous restrictions still persist with regard to freedom of expression dealing with, for example, coverage of allegations and discussion of corruption and criticism of government officials and of material regarded as an expression of sympathy or encouragement of subversion, all of which gravely prejudice the right of the media to inform the public and the right of the public to receive information.¹¹⁸

This, combined with the liberally invoked ban on political parties (section 17), was a key strategy in the denial of legitimacy: by passing opposition off as subversion, the regime could claim that it was protecting the state from harmful influences.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, section 16.

Conclusion

President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was re-elected in April 2009, having amended the constitution to allow for a third consecutive term. His continued presence at the head of the Algerian state reinforces what I have learnt from my research: that any changes to the distribution of political power in Algeria will be resisted fiercely. Bouteflika very nearly made it to the top much earlier in his career. He served as Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Ben Bella administration, where his occlusion by the President is said to have been one of the motivating factors behind the 1965 coup staged by Boumediene, one of Bouteflika's closest allies.¹ He continued in this role throughout Boumediene's long term in office, and was set to contest a tight Presidential election to replace his mentor in 1978 when the military decided to end the deadlock between him and Mohamed Salah Yahiaoui by opting for a compromise candidate in the form of Chadli Bendjedid.² Bouteflika was nonetheless included in Chadli's administration as a Minister of State, and it was only when he was pursued on charges of corruption by the *Cour des comptes* in 1981 that he left the political stage, seeking exile in Switzerland and the Gulf until 1987.³ His accession to the Presidency in 1999 is widely seen to be a reflection of the military's mistrust of President Zeroual's overtures, and after ten years in office little has been done to redress this military dominance of politics.⁴

More than anything else, it was this state of affairs that the FIS challenged. Its removal from the political game had little to do with its moral posturing or its attitude to women or personal liberties. These were used to depict the FIS as an intolerable threat to democracy, but actually at stake were privilege and power. The

¹ Ruedy, pp. 206–7.

² Evans and Phillips, p. 114.

³ 'Profile: Abdelaziz Bouteflika', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7728236.stm> [last accessed 4 May 2010].

⁴ See Mohamed Benchicou, *Bouteflika : une imposture algérienne* (Paris: Jean Picollec, 2004).

fact that these were threatened by the FIS is indicative of the party's main strength: it was radical enough to alter the nature of government, yet familiar enough to offer a credible, viable alternative. There can be no doubt that a FIS-led government would have depoliticised the military, undermined the long-standing privileges of the Francophone elite, and modified Algeria's international diplomatic relations, perhaps displeasing many of the country's Western allies. Albeit at the risk of instability, this would have transformed the political sphere, depriving the historic bearers of power of the channels that had kept them in positions of privilege. However, the party's wide electoral base meant that it could not sustain a model that departed excessively from the operability of existing state infrastructure. It is inconceivable that such a large percentage of the electorate voted for revolution; much more reasonable is to assume that they wanted a change from the corrupt, tired representatives of old, but expected the state to function more or less normally. This was not Afghanistan. There, the Taliban rulers did not have to tear down sophisticated infrastructure after the Soviet defeat in order to adopt a primitive style of governance, which is exactly what the FIS would have had to do if it had decided to govern 'à la Taliban', as ostensibly feared by the authorities responsible for the 1992 coup.⁵ That the FIS was not a retrograde party is highly significant in my reading of it as a *balanced* political force: intelligent enough to tap into tried-and-tested legacies such as nationalism and Islamic reformism, while at the same time redrawing the boundaries of politics in a way that promised voters innovation and change.

I have argued that this balance manifested itself in many ways. By challenging the statist nationalism of the FLN in favour of a 'vertical' expression of Algerian identity, it sought to refresh rather than supplant an existing form of legitimacy.

⁵ See Nezzar, *Un Procès pour la vérité*, p. 118.

Similarly, by politicising the combative but apolitical legacy of the earlier reformers, the FIS offered itself as an extension of that movement, bowing to the work already done while taking it to the next level. In Chapter III, we saw how the party ultimately opted, via the Djaz'ara, for representation that was moderate, respected legality and favoured compromise. Furthermore, this was clearly recognised by elements within the regime, given the level of cooperation that was apparent between Chadli's administration and the Islamists. In fact, I would suggest that it was precisely *because* the FIS was perceived to be a representative and viable alternative to the status quo that the military waged such a violent campaign against it. If, as portrayed by the authorities during the struggle, the FIS had represented radicalism and disregard for Algerian integrity, then it would never have garnered so many votes. Yet, even when faced with repression and hostile propaganda, what remained of the party continued to favour a political solution, as we saw in Chapter III.

My decision to refer to the FIS as balanced is deliberately polemical. I know that it is difficult to find balance in a party that upsets the democratic paradigm, employs fiery rhetoric invoking God, and uses anti-Western sentiment to appeal to voters. But I would argue that we need to revise our assumptions in the current global political climate. It is clear, I think, that a great *imbalance* affects world politics, with those nations that are acquiescent towards US and European dominance more likely to find approval and accommodation in the hierarchical interplay between nation-states. The only factor powerful enough to trump this state of affairs is economic might, as the notable exception of China now shows. But for most countries, tolerance of new and 'subversive' political forces means denial, on the international stage, of respect and privileges. In such a scenario, the imbalance of world politics can only be redressed by, on the one hand, persistent challenges from forces like the FIS, and on the other,

a reappraisal by politicians worldwide of what is fair, of what is democratic. For if democracy is to be truly representative, it cannot exclude movements like that represented by the FIS. By cancelling the elections in January 1992, the Algerian state did not only exclude that particular party, but effectively outlawed a massive segment of its own population. The support generated between 1989 and 1992 cannot be ‘disappeared’ in the same way that so many citizens were during the conflict. The feeling of dissatisfaction felt by the electorate did not go away.

Seen in this light, the FIS was balanced in two ways: domestically and globally. It displayed political maturity, flexibility, and respect for legality in its domestic fight for power, as I have argued throughout this work, particularly in Chapter III. But it also offered one of the most poignant examples in recent times of a party that sought to redress the imbalance of what constitutes respectable political expression—and, through no fault of its own, failed spectacularly. The current landscape of party politics in Algeria is completely dominated by the RND (founded by the military), the FLN, which switched its allegiance back to the military in the aftermath of the Sant’Egidio platform, and a handful of other parties who supported the coup in 1992. Notable exceptions include Hocine Aït Ahmed’s FFS and Louisa Hanoune’s PT. However, the tactics employed by the regime during the conflict are widely believed to have been unacceptable, so while it was successful in defeating its Islamist opponents, it failed to recover the faith of voters who had opted for the kind of change offered by the FIS.

At this stage, I would like to clarify my personal views in relation to the FIS, and Islamism more generally. There is a perception that writers who appear favourable to the emergence of political Islam are in fact seduced by the otherness of Islamic

solutions to political problems. Gilbert Achcar has even spoken of a kind of reverse Orientalism ('Orientalisme à rebours'), which operates an essentialist vision of the Muslim world in which Islamism is 'érigé en facteur de la modernité'.⁶ Borrowing from the work of a Syrian writer, Sadik Jalal Al-'Azm, who identified reverse Orientalism as an essentialist vision of the West as operated by Arab intellectuals,⁷ Achcar identifies six standpoints that characterise Western reverse Orientalists. It is worth citing these in detail:

1 – L'Orient islamique et l'Occident sont antithétiques ; il ne s'agit pas, ou pas seulement, du constat que les peuples orientaux s'opposent à l'impérialisme occidental, mais de l'idée que les idéologies occidentales dans leur ensemble, y compris les plus critiques comme le marxisme, sont inadéquates à cette fin.

2 – Le degré d'émancipation de l'Orient ne doit pas et ne peut pas être mesuré à l'aune de valeurs et de critères « occidentaux », comme la démocratie, la laïcité et la libération des femmes.

3 – L'Orient musulman ne peut pas être appréhendé avec les instruments épistémologiques des sciences sociales occidentales, et aucune analogie avec des phénomènes occidentaux n'est pertinente.

4 – La force motrice fondamentale de l'histoire islamique, le facteur principal qui meut les masses musulmanes, est culturel, c'est-à-dire religieux, et son importance dépasse celle des facteurs économiques et sociaux qui conditionnent les dynamiques politiques occidentales.

5 – La seule voie des pays musulmans vers leur renaissance passe par l'Islam – autrement dit, en empruntant à l'Église catholique une formule célèbre : « Hors de l'islam, pas de salut » (pour les musulmans, s'entend).

6 – Les mouvements qui brandissent l'étendard du « retour à l'islam » ne sont pas réactionnaires ou régressifs comme ils sont perçus par le regard occidental, mais sont, au contraire, des mouvements progressistes qui résistent à la domination culturelle occidentale.⁸

⁶ Achcar, p. 128.

⁷ Sadik Jalal Al-'Azm, 'Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse', in A. L. Macfie (ed.), *Orientalism: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), pp. 217–38.

⁸ Achcar, pp. 130–1.

The extent to which I identify with these positions is limited. I do not feel that there is an inherent antipathy between East and West, or even that Western ideologies are inadequate tools for Muslims to express opposition to imperialism. My argument is not about showing why there is a need for Islamism specifically; it is intended to show that where such a popular movement develops within the constitutional framework, it is unjust for it to be rejected. I would agree that Western 'criteria' such as democracy, secularism and women's liberation are not *necessarily* the only gauges of freedom, but I would not suggest that they 'must not' or 'cannot' be used. I avoid such rigidity: it is not a question of what is absolutely needed or absolutely not needed, but of what is chosen as a means of political expression. If an electorate seems to identify more with 'endogenous' criteria, to borrow from Burgat's lexicon, then it is only fair to respect that. Besides, in a country like Algeria, which has had such exposure to French values, the reality is that it will always preserve a certain balance between Western and non-Western references. Therefore, to say that 'no analogy' with Western phenomena is pertinent would be just as unfair as to say that only Western analogies are pertinent. With regard to Achcar's fourth point, there can be no doubt that the religio-cultural dimension is a central influence in most if not all Muslim countries, and Algeria is no different. But once again, it would be wrong to insist that this trumps any socio-economic influences. Such an approach in my view would undermine the viability of political Islam, as it would imply that the sacred is in competition with the profane, when in fact political Islam is an expression of both. We must not fall into the trap of depicting an either/or scenario, where the Islamists are either zealous and irrational, as they were portrayed during the conflict, or *really* just hiding behind a religious discourse in order to effect profane change, as Burgat's analysis sometimes suggests. It is not for me to suggest

just how necessary Islam is in the politics of Algeria. I will never insist that it is the ‘only path to renewal’, but I will defend its popular (and in my view sincere) mobilisation in an effort to redefine political boundaries and renew the people’s faith in its representatives. Finally, I find myself largely in agreement with the last point, which is that movements representing a ‘return to Islam’ are not regressive. I would add a cautious ‘not necessarily’, however. This thesis is not about defending Islamism *per se*, but about showing one individual party to have been worthy of admittance into democratic politics. And not only was the original decision to exclude it unjust, but it has had nothing but negative effects—for the Algerian people, for regional stability and for the advancement of politics worldwide.

Future research perspectives

I would like to conclude by reflecting on what this subject area has to offer in terms of future research perspectives. Two paths are possible: there are significant possibilities for researchers wishing to take a different approach, i.e., less explicitly political; and there are further *political* perspectives that I have not been able to incorporate into the present work. Of course, any study of the FIS is necessarily political to a certain extent, but one may place greater emphasis on different elements of the party’s emergence and subsequent decline. In Chapter I, for example, I suggested that the FIS’ challenge to the FLN’s control of nationalist sentiment was an important element in the party’s credibility, as it was clearly engaging with rather than subverting state legitimacy. This raises the potential for historiographical perspectives to be explored. I touched on this when I evoked the importance of documents like the *Charte d’Alger*, which laid out the state’s official attitude towards the liberation war or the early expansion of Islam into the Maghreb. Further study of

this would be useful, specifically in relation to the FIS. For example, the ways in which history is taught in the Algerian education system would provide insights into the FLN's self-generated legitimacy. It would be interesting to see whether this extends into the recent conflict or whether it is largely dependent on the conflict of the 1950s and 1960s. Also, to what extent, if any, has the FIS been included in recent Algerian historical writing? My research would suggest that work published in Algeria is of little use except to find perspectives that broadly support the regime. Almost all of my Algerian sources that are critical of the regime were published in France or elsewhere in Europe, with the exception of a FIS-sponsored online publication (*Le FIS du peuple*).

Another question of interest is the exact relationship between the FIS and the Islamic reformers, again raised in Chapter I. I also identified this relationship as an important element in the FIS' credibility, as it reveals both the party's legacy and its progression into modern politics, thus showing the FIS to have significant links with long-standing and legitimate forms of opposition, and not simply represent rupture. Further study would be useful here. I only account for the influence of Cheikhs Ben Badis, Soltani and Sahnoun, but it would be interesting to extend this analysis to others, such as Malek Bennabi, whose philosophical contributions are not contested but whose relationship to Islamism is.⁹

In terms of further *political* research on the FIS and the civil conflict, I would like to see three issues explored further: the motivations of the FIS electorate, the

⁹ See Nour-Eddine Boukrouh, *L'Islam dans l'islamisme : vie et pensée de Malek Bennabi* (Algiers: Samar, 2006), Chapter X, pp. 485-520, where the author describes Bennabi as a 'penseur musulman' but not a 'penseur islamiste' (p. 516). It should be pointed out, however, that Boukrouh had been a political rival of the FIS, having established the *Parti du renouveau algérien* (PRA) ahead of the 1991 elections, and considered himself to be the inheritor of Bennabi's philosophy. Rouadjia, however, refers to him as a 'vulgarisateur des idées bennabistes' (p. 143).

international dimension, and the state's accountability for the violence of the 1990s. The level of support for the FIS is beyond question, as the election results in 1990 and 1991 showed. However, in order to assess the quality of the party's mandate, it would be interesting to determine the primary motivating factors behind its success at the polls. Was this simply a protest vote against the FLN? Was it a vote for Islam? Or was it a vote for the political manifesto of the FIS? How significant did voters feel the Islamic credentials of the FIS were? Did they see the FIS as the heirs (*filis*) to the FLN or did they seek rupture? To my knowledge, no sociological study has been carried out that might determine the answers to some or all of these questions. Yet such a study would in my view be essential in assessing the long-term potential strength of Islamism in Algeria. While it would appear that the FIS itself has been definitively removed from the political scene, these questions remain of great pertinence to any future Islamist opposition that would be distinct from the Islamist parties currently in parliament, all of whom are largely acquiescent to the ongoing bureaucratic-military dominance.

In terms of the international dimension, there is evidence to suggest that both France and the US were key players in the events that took place in Algeria from October 1988 onwards.¹⁰ For a global understanding of the political dynamic in Algeria—indeed in any country—one would have to take into account the extreme pressure exerted at a diplomatic level by the world's major powers. However, my focus in this work was domestic. The fact that France, the US and others were

¹⁰ See for example: Lounis Aggoun and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, *Françalgérie, crimes et mensonges d'Etats : histoire secrète, de la guerre d'indépendance à la « troisième guerre » d'Algérie* (Paris: La Découverte, 2004); Jeremy H. Keenan, 'Security & Insecurity in North Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, 108/33 (June 2006), pp. 269–96; Fawaz A. Gerges, *America and Political Islam: Clash of Cultures or Clash of Interests?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), Ch. 7; Tamara Cofman Wittes, *Freedom's Unsteady March: America's Role in Building Democracy* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), Ch. 7.

influential (for example by initially backing the coup and the subsequent repressive strategy) does not alter my assessment of how actors like the FIS, President Chadli or the military behaved. Regardless of who the *real* decision-makers were during this period, the fact remains that the FIS appeared as a legitimate participant on the political stage, and the authorities ultimately ensured this legitimacy was denied. It would nonetheless be interesting to see further analysis, in particular of American influence, as it is US attitudes to emerging political opposition worldwide that has the most impact on the kind of *barriers to entry* that I discussed in Chapter II.

The final element I would like to see further explored is the Algerian state's accountability for the violence it is accused of having committed during the conflict of the 1990s. My work in Chapter IV, in particular the analysis of General Nezzar's statements and the state's interaction with the United Nations, goes some way towards developing this. While the question of the state's legal responsibilities under international law naturally falls to legal scholars, it is my view that there is greater scope within French Studies (or political science) to exploit the publicly available information on how the state defended its case before the UN. This could be combined with the reports produced by human rights organisations to assess the viability and legitimacy of the state as it currently functions, given that the dominant parties in Algeria today are loyal to the military forces accused of 'dirty' tactics.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Main Algerian political parties

- *En-Nahda*: founded in 1989 by Cheikh Abdallah Djaballah, this moderate Islamist party can be compared to the MSP in that it opposed the return of the FIS to politics and was largely supportive of the administration. Djaballah was replaced as party leader by Lahbib Adami in 1998, and went on to found a rival structure, *El-Islah*. Neither party is a major force, with five and three parliamentary seats respectively.
- *Front des forces socialistes* (FFS): founded in September 1963 by Hocine Aït Ahmed, who was one of the founding members of the FLN but resigned from the GPRA in 1962 in protest against the internal power struggles. He continues as party president today and enjoys particularly high support in his native Kabylie. The FFS has been the country's main opposition party since independence, campaigning for pluralism and political transparency since its creation. Although officially a secular party, the FFS supported the readmittance of the FIS into politics and was one of the signatories of the Sant'Egidio platform. It has boycotted the last two parliamentary elections (2002 and 2007).
- *Front de libération nationale* (FLN): founded in October 1954 in an effort to consolidate opposition to the French occupation, the FLN came to the fore with its call to revolution on 1 November of that year. Together with its armed branch, the *Armée de libération nationale* (ALN), it is credited with the success of the liberation struggle and formed the country's first government in the wake of independence, having forcibly dissolved the provisional government formed during the war (*Gouvernement provisoire de la République algérienne* – GPRA). Its monopoly of political power was absolute until the constitutional changes introduced in 1988, but it continued to dominate until the coup of January 1992, when the party opposed the military intervention. It remained in opposition to military rule until 1995, when the Secretary General, Abdelhamid Mehri, who had signed the Sant'Egidio platform, was replaced by Boualem Benmouhada, who quickly rejected it. This re-alignment of the FLN with the military led to a climate of political cooperation, as reflected in the current FLN-RND-MSP coalition.
- *Mouvement de la société de la paix* (MSP): founded in December 1990 by Mahfoud Nahnah (1942–2003) as the *Mouvement de la société islamique* (or HAMAS under its Arabic acronym), the MSP is now the country's main Islamist

group and the country's third largest party, with 51 seats in parliament. It has presented itself as moderate and legalist, opposing the Sant'Egidio platform in 1995 as an attempt to return the dissolved FIS to politics. The MSP has served in the last three governments, having offered its support to presidential candidate, Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

- *Mouvement démocratique et social* (MDS): founded in January 1966 as the *Parti de l'avant-garde socialiste* (PAGS), re-formed as *Et-Tehadi* in 1993 and renamed the MDS in 1999, this left-wing group was an influential voice of opposition via the country's main trade unions. However, its strength waned with the break-up of the Soviet Union and the rise of the Islamists, and it currently holds just one seat in parliament.
- *Parti des travailleurs* (PT): founded in 1990, the workers' party has sought a mandate on the basis of its secular, socialist opposition to the regime, claiming ancestry in the anti-imperialist *Etoile nord-africaine* and *Parti du peuple algérien*. Like the FFS, it supported the readmittance of the FIS onto the political scene. The party's leader, Louisa Hanoune, was a candidate in the 2004 and 2009 presidential elections. Together with the FFS, the PT has been one of the most influential voices of (legal) opposition in Algeria, and is currently the fourth largest Algerian party, with 26 seats in parliament.
- *Rassemblement national démocratique* (RND): founded in February 1997 by the military administration, the RND is at the forefront of Algerian politics, having won the parliamentary elections of 1997, largely believed to have been rigged, and having served in two successive coalitions with the FLN and MSP. As the country's second largest party, it is symbolic of the continuing influence of the Algerian army in domestic politics.
- *Rassemblement pour la culture et la démocratie* (RCD): founded in February 1989 under the leadership of Saïd Saadi, this secular party has traditionally enjoyed its highest popularity in the country's Berber regions, where it has campaigned for greater recognition for the Berber language and culture. It fiercely opposes Islamism, and aligned itself with the 'eradicators' in the regime during the civil conflict. It is currently the country's fifth largest party, with 19 seats in parliament.

Appendix 2 – Sant'Egidio Platform

Le Contrat National

Plateforme pour une solution politique et pacifique de la crise algérienne

Les partis de l'opposition algérienne, réunis à Rome auprès de la Communauté de Sant'Egidio, déclarent en ce 13 janvier 1995 :

L'Algérie traverse aujourd'hui une épreuve tragique sans précédent.

Plus de trente ans après avoir chèrement payé son indépendance, le peuple n'a pas pu voir se réaliser les principes et tous les objectifs du 1er novembre 1954 et a vu s'éloigner progressivement tous les espoirs nés après octobre 1988.

Aujourd'hui le peuple algérien vit un climat de terreur jamais égalé, aggravé par des conditions sociales et économiques intolérables. Dans cette guerre sans images : séquestrations, disparitions, assassinats, torture systématisée, mutilations et représailles sont devenus le lot quotidien des Algériennes et des Algériens.

Les conséquences des événements de juin 1991 et du coup d'Etat du 11 janvier 1992, l'interruption du processus électoral, la fermeture du champ politique, la dissolution du FIS, l'instauration de l'état d'urgence et les mesures répressives et les réactions qu'elles ont suscitées, ont engendré une logique d'affrontement.

Depuis, la violence n'a cessé de s'amplifier et de s'étendre. Les tentatives du pouvoir de créer des milices au sein de la population marquent une nouvelle étape dans la politique du pire. Les risques de guerre civile sont réels, menaçant l'intégrité physique du peuple, l'unité du pays et la souveraineté nationale.

L'urgence d'une solution globale, politique et équitable s'impose afin d'ouvrir d'autres perspectives à une population qui aspire à la paix et à la légitimité populaire.

Le pouvoir n'a initié que de faux dialogues qui ont servi de paravents à des décisions unilatérales et à la politique du fait accompli.

Une véritable négociation reste l'unique moyen de parvenir à une issue pacifique et démocratique.

A - Cadre : valeurs et principes

Les participants s'engagent sur la base d'un contrat national dont les principes sont les suivants et sans l'acceptation desquels aucune négociation ne serait viable :

- La déclaration du 1er novembre 1954 : « la restauration de l'Etat algérien souverain démocratique et social dans le cadre des principes de l'islam (art. 1) » ;
- Le rejet de la violence pour accéder ou se maintenir au pouvoir ;
- Le rejet de toute dictature quelle que soit sa nature ou sa forme et le droit du peuple à défendre ses institutions élues ;
- Le respect et la promotion des droits de la personne humaine tels qu'énoncés par la Déclaration universelle, les pactes internationaux sur les droits de l'homme, la Convention internationale contre la torture, et consacrés par les textes légaux ;
- Le respect de l'alternance politique à travers le suffrage universel ;
- Le respect de la légitimité populaire. Les institutions librement élues ne peuvent être remises en cause que par la volonté populaire ;
- La primauté de la loi légitime ;
- La garantie des libertés fondamentales, individuelles et collectives quelles que soient la race, le sexe, la confession et la langue ;
- La consécration du multipartisme ;
- La non implication de l'armée dans les affaires politiques. Le retour à ses attributions constitutionnelles de sauvegarde de l'unité et de l'indivisibilité du territoire national ;
- Les éléments constitutifs de la personnalité algérienne sont l'islam, l'arabité et l'amazighité ; la culture et les deux langues concourant au développement de cette

personnalité doivent trouver dans ce cadre unificateur leur place et leur promotion institutionnelle, sans exclusion ni marginalisation ;

- La séparation des pouvoirs législatif, exécutif, et judiciaire ;
- La liberté et le respect des confessions.

B - Mesures devant précéder les négociations

- La libération effective des responsables du FIS et de tous les détenus politiques. Assurer aux dirigeants du FIS tous les moyens et garanties nécessaires leur permettant de se réunir librement entre eux et avec tous ceux dont ils jugent la participation nécessaire à la prise de décisions.
- L'ouverture du champ politique et médiatique. L'annulation de la décision de dissolution du FIS. Le plein rétablissement des activités de tous les partis.
- La levée des mesures d'interdiction et de suspension des journaux des écrits et des livres, prises en application du dispositif d'exception.
- La cessation immédiate, effective et vérifiable de la pratique de la torture.
- L'arrêt des exécutions des peines capitales, des exécutions extrajudiciaires et des représailles contre la population civile.
- La condamnation et l'appel à la cessation des exactions et des attentats contre les civils, les étrangers et la destruction des biens publics.
- La constitution d'une commission indépendante pour enquêter sur ces actes de violences et les graves violations des Droits de l'homme.

C - Rétablissement de la paix

Une dynamique nouvelle pour la paix implique un processus graduel, simultané et négocié comprenant :

- d'une part, des mesures de détente réelle : fermeture des camps de sûreté, levée de l'état d'urgence et abrogation du dispositif d'exception ;
- et d'autre part, un appel urgent et sans ambiguïté pour l'arrêt des affrontements. Les Algériennes et les Algériens aspirent au retour de la paix civile.

Les modalités d'application de cet engagement seront déterminées par les deux parties en conflit avec la participation active des autres partis représentatifs.

Cette dynamique exige la participation pleine et entière des forces politiques représentatives et pacifiques. Celles-ci sont en mesure de contribuer au succès du processus en cours et assure l'adhésion de la population.

D - Le retour à la légalité constitutionnelle

Les partis s'engagent à respecter la Constitution du 23 février 1989. Son amendement ne peut se faire que par les voies constitutionnelles.

E - Le retour à la souveraineté populaire

Les parties prenantes aux négociations doivent définir une légalité transitoire pour la mise en œuvre et la surveillance des accords. Pour cela, elles doivent mettre en place une Conférence nationale dotée de compétences réelles, composée du pouvoir effectif et des forces politiques représentatives.

Cette conférence définira :

- les structures transitoires, les modalités et la durée d'une période de transition la plus courte possible devant aboutir à des élections libres et pluralistes qui permettent au peuple le plein exercice de sa souveraineté ;
- la liberté de l'information, le libre accès aux médias et les conditions du libre choix du peuple doivent être assurés ;
- le respect des résultats de ce choix doit être garanti.

F – Garanties

Toutes les parties prenantes à la négociation sont en droit d'obtenir des garanties mutuelles. Les partis, tout en gardant leur autonomie de décision :

- s'opposent à toute ingérence dans les affaires internes de l'Algérie ;
- dénoncent l'internationalisation de fait qui est le résultat de la politique d'affrontement menée par le pouvoir ;

- demeurent convaincus que la solution de la crise ne peut être que l'œuvre exclusive des Algériens et doit se concrétiser en Algérie ;
 - s'engagent à mener une campagne d'information auprès de la communauté internationale pour faire connaître l'initiative de cette plateforme et lui assurer un soutien ;
 - décident de lancer une pétition internationale pour appuyer l'exigence d'une solution politique et pacifique en Algérie ;
 - appellent la communauté internationale à une solidarité agissante avec le peuple algérien ;
 - décident de maintenir les contacts entre eux en vue d'une consultation et d'une concertation permanentes.
-

Les signataires :

- Pour la **Ligue algérienne de défense des droits de l'homme**, Abdenour Ali Yahia
- Pour le **Front de libération nationale (FLN)**, Abdelhamid Mehri
- Pour le **Front des forces socialistes (FFS)**, Hocine Aït Ahmed et Ahmed Djeddaï
- Pour le **Front islamique du salut (FIS)**, Rabah Kebir et Anouar Haddam
- Pour le **Mouvement pour la démocratie en Algérie**, Ahmed Ben Bella et Khaled Bensmaïn
- Pour le **Parti des travailleurs**, Louisa Hanoune
- Pour le **Mouvement de la renaissance islamique (En-Nahda)**, Abdallah Djaballah
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